



P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa): "Apparition Poem #1342, 1352 (for Jenny Kanzler)"

*What's in what eyes?
What I see in hers is
mixed greenish silence,
somewhat garish, it's
past girlish (not much),
but I can't touch her
flesh (set to self-destruct),
anymore than she can
understand the book
her cunt is, that no one
reads directly, or speaks
of, there's no love other
than "could be," but I
think of her throat cut—
that's her slice of smut.*

.....

*Then, there was this—
the creepy sense that it
had all been nothing
to you (everything being
nothing, no one being
anyone, nothing being
anything), & that you
had your own set of*

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

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- Rachel Blau DuPlessis: Futility
- Andrew Duncan: Oxytocin
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- Adam Fieled



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spiders (exquisite or
not) to cast out into
the world to do your
bidding, so that betrayal
was never far from your
blood-rotted, starvation-
besotted, pistol-plotted
mind. And so it was.
That slightly nauseous
green, your paint insignia,
was in your aura, too,
so that blooms of youth
became lands of the dead,
& your domain was as
much visionary deadness
as mine, yet ready to do
real, nauseous, disastrous
evil in the world. I don't know why.

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Jenny Kanzler: *Things Beneath the Surface 2*

Jenny Kanzler: *Things Beneath the Surface 2*.

Barry Schwabsky's song of himself

You know, you can't necessarily decide what you should do and then execute that decision. Some people can, but not me. For me, it's not a question of what I should write or even what I could write—but of what I *can* write. I recognize that my capacities and aptitudes are fairly limited. There are all kinds of things I like to read but are part of an endeavor that I know it's not in me to contribute anything substantial to. To some extent these limitations are almost physiological: I've got a nervous disposition, I'm easily bored, so it doesn't work for me to try and do anything in too systematic a way—it's got to be something more mercurial. And then there are questions of what you might call self-image that reinforce this. There are a lot of people out there who are trying to be professional poets. I don't think they

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really are that entirely—in most cases it would be more accurate to say that they are professional poetry teachers. But in any case, they need to have a certain track record, they need to publish a certain amount and so on. And I think it makes more sense for those people to do project-oriented works than it does for me, so I kind of steer clear of their territory. I believe in a division of labor! It's all worth doing, but that doesn't mean that I have to do all of it. I cultivate an idea of myself as an amateur, so I like pushing the idea that I will write poetry without a plan or schedule, that it will be something I dip into periodically—like a dilettante! Why not? (Anyway, it's hard enough for me to do that with the writing I have to work at systematically, my art criticism.) I admit that this is really a sort of vanity, not very different from my notion that since I don't work in an office, I will never dress in any clothes that anybody would ever be likely to wear to the office—that way no one will ever mistake me for an office worker. Likewise, no one should ever mistake my poetry for that of a creative writing professor. Ridiculous, I know, but there you go.

Robert Archambeau: Rhizomes and more

...You're probably right about the trend toward book-length works in post-avant writing. I have nothing like *actual data* to work with, but that's never stood in my way before, so let's roll with the assumption that there is a trend toward book-length poems. I suspect you're right for two reasons: an institutional one and another that has to do with the large-scale history of poetics. You really can't underestimate the influence of that massive institutional edifice, the MFA program, on poetry nowadays. One of the things many people are encouraged to do in such programs is to write series of linked poems. I understand why: it's a way to get students to stretch out beyond the short lyric, to explore a form or a topic, and to understand the architecture of a book. So that's the institutional reason. The other reason is that our poetics have evolved to a point where we aren't really asking for a very rigorous coordination of parts into a whole. That is, you no longer have to write with the kind of OCD level of attention to how your book-length project adds up to a whole in order to think of it as a single project. Milton would have died a little to think that a part of *Paradise Lost* had only an oblique connection to the unified whole, for example. But in our time, there is a strong sense that the truly sophisticated work eschews classical decorum, or even the kind of hidden unity behind a façade of fragments that we find in a poem like Eliot's *Waste Land*. Some of this comes from the triumph of deconstruction and post-structuralism: after Derrida and company showed us all the fissures and disunities in the texts we'd thought of as whole, the goals of the Big Unified Work seemed less viable. And when Deleuze and Guattari described the rhizome as the form of our time, they

authorized a lot of works in which various parts connected with each other somewhat haphazardly. So we see a lot of book-length poems where the bar for textual unity has been set fairly low. You can call it a book-length work if a lot of the parts only sort of connect. In a way, you could say what's changed hasn't been a matter of substance so much as it has been a matter of labeling. Wallace Stevens presented his first book, *Harmonium*, as a collection of individual poems. But those poems have enough by way of thematic and stylistic overlap that, had he been able to anachronistically appropriate Deleuze and Guattari's language and called it a single, rhizomatic whole, no one now would bat an eye. Anyway, this movement toward big works that are really collections of linked fragments isn't as new as we'd like to think. The roots of it go back at least as far as Poe's essay "The Poetic Principle," in which he argues that the unified long poem isn't really possible....

A long letter from JET (Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum)

C: To be honest, I canNOT remember the last time I heard a poem THAT LONG (20 minutes read aloud?) with that much exuberance and vigilance to the detail-oriented care of what seemed every single word written/spoken. You reinvent for us (for me at least) the road to self discovery with the poem. There were threads of separate image/subject/style, these individual threads which you kept braiding from your mouth to our ears. And of course there are countless forms from poetry's history which repeat or rephrase. But these threads were very much your own, and each seemed to have total worlds of their own, almost separate voices of awareness (not to say that at times there won't be unconscious experiences which propel a thread into a certain conscious experience, but maybe no, maybe yes, maybe no, maybe maybe maybe, whatever...) but at the same time were each born from the same conscious being. Sometimes different ages of one woman lived in a single moment of a single word, so it seemed. How would you explain how you came to construct each thread's own voice?

CC: you are an incredibly generous listener and reader. Your choice of wording in terms of "threads" is entirely apropos as this is exactly how I refer to the different voices / sections / styles. (I have been obsessed with the "weave" since my Temple days and the notion of weaving together disparate threads which maintain their individuality continues to fascinate me).

AND MY natural enough REACTION IS: Well, what the hell was I thinking when I called poetry masturbatory?? ----- when it's abundant clear that THIS sort of exchange does masturbation one better!: "I'll help YOU masturbate YOURSELF if you help ME masturbate MYSELF!" It's not even proper whoredom; at least whores have market

rates, and some sort of ambiguous relative worth, and there's a genuine exchange, and at least the john gets OFF!

No no no, this is something far creepier, far less human: this is the mutual agreement to suspend intelligence (and joy) for the sake of not having one's obvious inadequacies pointed out. "I know I'm ugly, but if I promise not to mention you're ugly, we can both say we're attractive, all right?"

Witness C's nonsensical, over-the-top drooling (which reminds me exactly of Shitlock's panegyrics before each of his readers): "You reinvent for us...the road to self-discovery" !!! "these individual threads which you kept braiding from your mouth to our ears" !!! "Sometimes different ages of one woman lived in a single moment of a single word" !!!!!!!!! MY GOD, how could he keep lifting that heavy shit-shovel? (especially with his little t. rex arms?)

And GLORY BE, how GENEROUS of Babs to acknowledge! and celebrate! how clever little C is! in his critical blowjob question! "My god, how wonderful you are, C, for understanding how magnificent I am!" Grotesque, absofuckinlutely grotesque little lice. AND I refrained, only with great difficulty, from c-ing-and-p-ing (pasting and lambasting!) the viscous blob of Barbara's pseudo-self-hagiographic criticism which is easy enough to mock: "The 'aging' of the threads / personas has become an increasingly complicated question.... to explore the 'little girl consciousness' as it grows and evolves into an 'adult (woman) writer' with an ever-increasing anxiety in relation to language." -- Oh indeed! Indeed! Girls become women indeed! Thank GOD I have a POET handy to explain these ELUSIVE MYSTERIES OF LIFE! Or rather (my god what they would think of my slovenly approach to criticism!) -- to employ a more decently high-fallutin' tone appropriate to the occasion: "The poet (the writer) elucidates (or "makes known") a realm of gendered dispositions, inflections, connotations, and un-linguaged (or rather, pre-linguaged) communications which take as their subject language itself -- that is, the "word" in relation the "wor(l)d" with transgressive yet gendered "I" understood -- in the service of making known ("elucidating") the dialectic of female maturation, both as she experiences in relation to herself (made known through language) and as her language itself experiences its own maturation in relation to herself (and make known through her own maturation)."

Now that's a lotta mutual maturation.

Once again, as I've too often ranted, poor Adam, whom I desperately need on my side: THESE are the ENEMIES: obfuscation and pretension, hucksterism, those who want us to buy without having anything to sell us, those who want us to love without having any way to love us back, those who want to become saints by martyring US.

AND IT'S A WAR.

Chris McCabe (London, UK): fragment from *The Nuptials*

the smell of the sea
on your skin—

as today your breasts
(can I say this) poured out

to the beach at
San Sebastian

eyes saw more than they
could hold

like Aphrodite was back
against the tide of fashion

a shell in your hand
innocently to show me

with more inside
than today can hold

© Chris McCabe 2009

Alexandra Grilikhes (Philadelphia, USA): "Vacation"

death came to me drunk
wearing a new white island outfit
she'd bought that day. The men
on the road called us cunts.
"This is my dream place," she breathed,
"I feel so alive here. Fuck me on this
bench." On the half-lit porch,
the watchman taking a midnight nap
around the bend, I did as I was

told for a long time thinking I'd
please death this time at last. Later
she rolled away and in the morning
rose early and left. I bought
death many presents. She bought me rags.

© Alexandra Grilikhes 1994

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Abby Heller-Burnham: from *Art Odyssey: Artist's Statement*

I use a combination of naturalism and spontaneity to represent certain aspects of what I have seen and experienced during semi-conscious dream states. My work portrays an ethereal luminosity that creates life-like spaces which the viewer can visually enter. My goal is to create increasingly complex compositions by combining multiple images from a vast collection of visual references. With a highly disciplined background in traditional methods and techniques as a base, I nevertheless strive to expand its boundaries to find new artistic approaches through continual experimentation.

I find nineteenth century naturalism to be particularly inspiring. Its simplicity of design, complex esthetic content, and distinct atmospheric quality all resonate with my artistic sensibilities. Klimt and Mucha, for example, have been important influences, particularly their unique blend of graphic patterns and textures with natural realism. I am always in the process of finding my own delicate balance between naturalism and other contradictory interests that also inspire me. I believe that a versatile and experimental approach leads to the resolution of this conflict, and allows me to reach beyond realism to more fully express my ideas.

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Interview with Jenny Kanzler: *Orange Alert*, 2007

Orange Alert (OA): How would you describe your work?

Jenny Kanzler (JK): Symbols for anxiety, fear, loneliness and loss or metaphors for invasion, like illness, infection, and infestation -- generally, preoccupations of nightmares. Many of my paintings focus on the struggle between empathy and

disgust and the relationship of the viewer to the object or conflict. They present things that did happen, altered through a faulty memory, simplified to isolate some specific occurrence, embellished, rewritten and presented as some new story connected to the original only in essence. They are narratives, employing realism and storytelling to represent an idea.

OA: You seem to have a very interesting and at times dark subject matter, where do you draw your inspiration from?

JK: The Velveteen Rabbit (William Nicholson illustrations), the Twilight Zone, David Lynch (especially the Elephant Man and Eraserhead), Bluebeard, the Brother's Quay, Francisco Goya, Francis Bacon, Hans Holbein the Younger, Diego Velazquez, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, A Nightmare on Elm street, the Changeling, Rosemary's Baby, the Little Girl who Lived Down the Lane, Saturday matinee movies, the playground - the girl who pretended to be a horse, the day Brian Flaherty and I threw up in the lunchroom, Aldus Huxley's Heaven and Hell, Freud's essay on the uncanny, my German grandmother, my beau Abe, my family and friends and the many strange and interesting things that they say, people I don't know who sleep on the subway, the naked man at the end of the alley and all kinds of other surprising occurrences that a person might witness walking around Philadelphia at any time of day or night.

OA: I've noticed a lot of reoccurring colors in your work, do you have a set color palette? What is your intention in using these specific colors?

JK: The colors I use are burnt umber, raw sienna, raw umber, cadmium yellow, cadmium red, cerulean blue, ultramarine blue, alizarin crimson, and titanium white. Generally, I underpaint in earth tones, and then as the image develops incorporate more color. Since the development of the image interests me, I try not to hide everything that's happened. Lately, I've been inserting jewel tones and placing them in contrast to muddy colors, presenting a clean/dirty conflict that relates to the empathy/disgust conflict.

OA: Earlier this year you participated in a solo show entitled "Creepy Sweet". In my opinion that really describes your work, a little creepy, but sweet and nostalgic. It's familiar, but uncomfortable at the same time. What is the intended purpose of presenting these images and what are some of the reactions that you have received?

JK: When others describe the work as familiar, as you just did, or say that it reminds them of something that happened to them, and then they tell me some personal story, or if they laugh, those are the best reactions. Occasionally I completely horrify people, and then we're all upset and disturbed. The goal of connecting with others

through an investigation of the human condition is lost. I worry that I have misjudged my audience and that my insertion has a negative impact on others. There's also an embarrassment component. It's as if I've said you know how sauerkraut smells awful but it tastes so good and it's almost as if the reason that it's so good is that it smells so bad, it's like it's the contrast or something...and the other person replies no - sauerkraut is disgusting.

OA: I have noticed a lot of great work coming out of Philly lately. How would describe the current scene in Philly?

JK: To me it seems small enough to be manageable but large enough to be interesting. My recent favorites are Hiro Sakaguchi at Seraphin Gallery, and Mark Shetabi at the Tower Gallery. Longtime favorites are local heroes Edna Andrade, Thomas Chimes and Sydney Goodman. Second Thursday at the Crane building is never disappointing. The building was formerly a bathroom fixture factory, which is now converted into artists' studios and galleries including Inliquid, Nexus, the Icebox, and Kelly Webber Fine Art (formerly 201 gallery where I had the "Creepy Sweet" show). There's a refreshing enthusiasm in the gallery owners. They present what interests them and take chances with younger, lesser-known artists. Plus, second Thursday visitors are greeted by a generous offering of food and alcohol.

OA: What's next for Jenny Kanzler?

JK: Other than making a Halloween costume? From October 8th - November 6th, I'll have several paintings on view in the "Window on Broad" adjacent to the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, near the northeast intersection of Broad and Pine, Center City Philadelphia. October 19th - November 9th, i cannot remember, a four-person show of sculpture, video, and drawings with fellow artists and friends: Alison Nastasi (who curated the show), Theresa Rose and Mariya Dimov at little berlin gallery, 1801 N. Howard Street, near the intersection of 2nd and Montgomery in Fishtown, Philadelphia. Opening reception: October 19th from 6:00 - 10:00 PM with a performance by MFM. February 1st - 28th. Solo show of painting, drawing and sculpture at the Elliott Center Gallery at The University of North Carolina in Greensboro. Opening reception: February 4th, 5:30 - 7:30 PM.

© Jenny Kanzler, Orange Alert 2007

Alexandra Grilikhes (Philadelphia, USA): "Torment"

you know how certain people torment you as you
walk home in the rain on a day in february
feeling desolate,
saying to yourself, she torments me and I don't
know why. She torments me. She is one of those
people who torments me

and you walk in the darkness, it's raining,
you're cold and feeling not unhappy
but not happy either and
she is always under your skin,
something you can't describe

and you know if you say one word about it
you will lose it completely, that she torments you
and you want the thing about her that torments you
to keep on hurting

© Alexandra Grilikhes 1994

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Argotist Online (Take 2)

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

The Argotist Online poetry index was offline for a while. It returned briefly, altered and with new URLs. Here we have the document of the new AO poetry index, while the collection is fragmented. Have a look. Some of the links work, some don't.

- Alexandra Grilikhes (Philadelphia, USA): "Torment"
- Argotist Online (Take 2)
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- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa): PICC (...)
- In the Loop...
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- Vladlen Pogorelov (Rocklin, California, USA): from...
- Andrew Lundwall (Rockford, Illinois, USA): from Ga...
- William Allegrezza in...

Contributors

- Adam Fieled



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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

P.F.S.: Jenny Kanzler Pt. 2: Year of the Rat

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

I watched President Obama's victory speech from Dirty Frank's at 13th and Pine with a few friends. It was quiet in the bar; you could've heard a pin drop; and I was anticipating something, and someone, extraordinary. We all were; and when all we got was a bunch of tired, crass, generalized clichés, we made (I noticed then) a silent collective decision not to notice it. Broad Street was crazy that night—everyone was out celebrating. Aughts Philly had its levels of oddity and irony, one of which was that, for all our *joie de vivre*, the Republican regime in control of Washington and its attendant media juggernaut was a continual, joy-inhibiting bummer for us. Obama was supposed to deliver us into a new, politically liberated era; yet, that November night in '08, I feared the worst— that we were looking at a different version of the same corruption and complacency, and that the change which had come to America was none at all. Obama, indeed, was perfunctory that night; and Dirty Frank's and Broad Street were perfunctory for me, too. It was the culminating moment of my, and our, strangest Aughts year (2008); one which passed without a sense of distinction, and with a sense of Aughts Philly in general drifting out of focus and towards the sense of stalemate which ushered in the Teens. If I linger on 2008 now, it's because I'm fascinated by my own inability to pin it down, define it, give it a determinate shape the way I can all the other Aughts years, including the 2009 which followed from it.

Artist Posts

- From Siren's Silence (Volume 2 Number 3)
- P.F.S.: Symbolists and Hallucinogenics (Part 1)
- From Seven Corners Poetry (ed. Steve Halle)
- From Seven Corners Poetry
- Adam Fieled (State College, Pennsylvania, USA): "S..."
- Chris McCabe (Montreal, Quebec/Dagenham, London, U...)
- Tammy Armstrong (Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada...)
- Rosanna Lee (Manhattan, New York): "Shoot the Freak"
- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania...)
- From Poetry (2005)

Contributors

- Adam Fieled

Among other things, it is the year I came closest to actual alcoholism (thus catching up, finally, to Mike, Nick, and Jeremy); my life at Temple was so full of drudgery and thankless compromises that just to get through the nights which followed the days, I'd have to knock back several Jack and Cokes. Some of the pictures taken of me at the time show me looking uncharacteristically soggy and fish-faced. When I moved, that summer, from 21st and Race to 23rd and Arch, it was a down-sized and down-sizing move; the new flat had low ceilings, an unpleasant view of parking lots, and I felt claustrophobic in it. Mary and I had broken up again in late '07; yet we couldn't get out of each other's pockets, and when she showed her Eden portrait of us at



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PAFA that spring, I was very proud. I was also amused that the portrait seemed to suggest me on solid, balanced ground and Mary falling all over herself— that's not how I felt. Abs was still showing on First Fridays and elsewhere, but she was off my radar at the time— I hadn't yet noticed that she'd transformed herself into a first-rate artistic genius. She was also, I later discovered, flailing on other levels. Jeremy had disowned me completely— and when he began a reading series in '08 called *Toiling in Obscurity* with some U of Arts foundlings, and affixed the tag-line *even our minor accomplishments are overshadowed by our utter anonymity*, I could sense there was a strange and ghastly crescendo issuing from all Philly Free School sides. Jenny Kanzler consolidated all these snafus in my conversations with her then.

When I think of my own 2008 as a complete gestalt entity, including risky (and confrontational) affairs I had going at the time, I think of Aughts Philly starting to go cock-eyed. Yet, everyone was still in the bars and in the streets, and a sense of isolation didn't seem to be a problem, quite. 2008 was my first adult "bridge year," with, in it, a sense of the liminal and of blinkered confusion. I wrote *Chimes* as I was moving that summer, in a great deal of emotional pain from the necessity of reliving my childhood, and with a sense of foreboding about what awaited me at Temple that fall. *The White Album*, also written at this time, showcased the funnier, Rabelaisian facet of all the grunginess, while *Rubber Soul* reveled in drunkenness. When autumn arrived, Otoliths was putting out *When You Bit...* and, as usual for that era, the reaction online was intense, while the crooked, vituperative Philly poetry scene continued to cold-shoulder me. That Philadelphia poetry world— of clowns, impostors, and henchmen— was not intriguing to me on any level. I was, as of '08, still having better poetry luck with Chicago, both online and in the flesh. The stint I did at Loyola that summer is a case in point.

One night that May, on returning to Logan Square from a reading in South Philly, I was mugged at gunpoint, and had my wallet stolen. My assailant actually stuck the pistol into my ribcage— yet, I had an intuition he wouldn't shoot me. The whole year was cock-eyed— I even (if you can believe this) saw an identifiably angelic being on 21st Street one July afternoon. If '08 needs to be remembered distinctly for how non-distinct it was in the run of major Aughts Philly years, its because the weird evanescent character it has will remain frozen forever in what we created and disseminated that year, along with ricochets back of what has already been released. The most important facet of '08 for me personally is that it is the last of my Mary years— one in which we were together, at least in spirit. After '08, we kept in touch, but things could never be the same again between us. To see that cycle of death and rebirth turning, with some hindsight, is as terrible and beautiful as it was to live the agonies, ecstasies, and convulsions of the first time through.

P.F.S.: Jenny Kanzler

So the official story goes: I met the painter Jenny Kanzler in 2008. I was sitting in the Last Drop one weekend afternoon in April or May, working, and she approached me and introduced herself. She was very pretty in a cherubic way, not unlike Abby Heller-Burnham. Over the course of 2008, we had coffee many times. I wouldn't call these tete-a-tetes dates— Jenny was otherwise engaged— but we got to know each other with some thoroughness. Jenny, both in her paintings and in her life, had a fascination with “the stunted,” in general terms— stunted people, stunted situations, even stunted animals (she found tarantulas “exquisite.”) She also had a fetish for violence and gore— the films she liked were violent, and the art. Jenny had been at PAFA along with Abby and Mary, but she usually declined to discuss them. I got the distinct impression that they were not among her favorite artists there. Mary's *The Fall* was showing at PAFA precisely when I met Jenny Kanzler, in fact. She gave it a mixed review. There was some sexual tension in the air between myself and Ms. Kanzler, but she made clear that she was, by then, mostly a Platonic soul. Abby and Mary seemed floridly liberated, eroticized, and romantic in comparison, despite Jenny's attractiveness. It stirred in the depths that she did seem strangely familiar to me. Jenny did have a singular mind and a singular vision, and made a strong impression. It seemed to me that the substitution, in Jenny's art, of violence for love and sex was a deliberate one, but (this was my own prejudice) not necessarily a healthy one. Jenny's penchant, by then, for violent, rather than sexual, smut, was what inspired Apparition Poem 1342, along with the sense, mistaken or not, that Jenny was sublimating so that the part of her psyche which wanted her to remain a stunted little girl would stay untouched, unchallenged, and inviolable.

The phenomenological import of the poem is a torque of Elegy 414— I privilege myself to do a break-in into Jenny's brain, and have a look around. The problem with phenomenological break-ins is that it is difficult to ascertain whether what you are seeing is real, is really someone else's brain, or if what you find is just a projection of your own fantasies. It could be that Jenny's “slice of smut” is more involved in real emotion and intellection, not just a product of stunted adolescence, but there was no way for me to tell, as I was writing, whether this was the case or not. In fact, I believe the break-in in 1342 is brash enough, pompous enough, even, as a male narrator violating a woman, that this Apps Protagonist seems like a half-pig. If he is correct in his assumptions, however, his piggishness has still won him intercourse with a woman who has denied him conventional entrance. It is worth noting that I didn't fight Jenny this way— no passes were made, nor did I have the experience of falling in love with her— but the bullying energy to understand her made for some

strange, loopy mind games between us, and our gaming against each other on cognitive levels lasted a few years.

To broaden the context— by 2008, the Recession era was starting to sink in, and much of the grandeur of Aughts Philly, the romance and the sense of freedom, were beginning to fade. For Jenny Kanzler to enter my life at the time she did, and for us to become sparring partners rather than lovers, was a sign of the times for me, an inversion of the odal early Aughts, and some of the hard-won victories of the mid-Aughts, its sense of carnal mayhem, too. A beacon of the impulses behind the composition of *The White Album* at that time. A beacon also, perhaps, inverse-shining towards a realization of the Great Recession, and what it was to become. It's also germane for me that by 2008, an emergent, notable Philadelphia painter's generalized equation involved violence, gore, and the stunted to sexualized expressiveness; where all of America was headed was into a meat-grinder of violence, moral/ethical bankruptcy, and generally entropic conditions, and those of us who wanted the Aughts, which facilitated art around sex and romance, to go on forever, were to be bitterly disappointed.



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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa): PICC (*A Poet in Center City*) #42

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

Competition, folks. It lurks there as a demon between males of the species, doing a sourpuss number on camaraderie and true brotherhood, making a mockery of ties

which could bind with more authority, beleaguering situations which shouldn't matter. "Bros before hos," Larsen used to say, who was no misogynist but often stumbled around semantics. To be fair, Larsen's girls were hardly hos, as the saying goes. They tended to share many of his stripes, as Trish Webber shared stripes with me— fetish/boutique stalwarts, underworld slants, heavy tempers, club-and-pub mentalities. It's just that many of them were also gorgeous and, as I couldn't not notice, and as began at the turn of the century, none of them had eyes for me at all. I wound up looking like a Larsen-flunky around them. Club-and-pub meant they often wouldn't even look me in the face— they didn't need to. So when I found myself, for example, sitting half-naked on the shag-rug in South Philly, looking at Anastasia, a stunning brunette from New Jersey who was famous for starting trouble with guys, in her bra and panties, it was with the exasperated sense of the usual wheel turning—

not only no eyes for me, but also no sense that she could even directly look me in the face. But, to shade the painting diligently, with some respect to precision, it must be said that by late '04 I had a sense of revenge going. It had transpired, in the spring of '03, that I brought Trish Webber and Tobi Simon to Larsen's studio for a visit. My ostensible reason was to see if I could match Tobi with Larsen. Trish and I were steady at the time. What happened was cacophonous— we all smoked a bunch of weed, some of it my plain jane stuff, some of it Larsen's H-laced, cough-and-flu treasure trove. Tobi didn't think much of Larsen, and vice versa. But, when we were all high as kites, I saw Larsen lock into Trish in a manner that expressed total enchantment. Trish's long limbs, wide hips, and equally long, lank blonde mane could only be enticing to a Philly guy also entangled deeply with Europe, as Larsen was, who could be, in a number of different sectors, continental at any moment. Larsen locked into Trish, and began to flirt with her. Heavily. "Bros before hos," huh? At first, I was amused. The level that this was Aughts Philly was a self-conscious one,

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- Chris McCabe (London, UK): from Zeppelins, "A Prop...
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which meant it would've been uncool to try and stop what was developing. At first, High as kites though all of us were, I started to understand that, willy-nilly, meant business. He really was going to try to fuck Trish right in front of me. Alright, So, gathering my wits, I made my apologies to Larsen and dragged the two ladies down the steps, and out again into the warm spring day. Larsen, on the negative side of things, had taken things too far that day. On the other side of things, I had him— a righteous cock-block of a dude whose girls were constantly cock-blocking me. It never moved, after that— Larsen had a hard-on for Trish Webber that, to his credit, he never really tried to hide. Even if South and West Philly weren't working together

well then. When I broke up with Trish the first time in late '03, it was that South-to-West imbroglia which made it so that, as shocked me, Larsen made no move in her direction. And, I might add, continued to pine. Trish never denied there was an attraction there, but it was minor for her. Trish had a continental sensibility too, but wouldn't have liked that Larsen's self-presentation could be construed as Eurotrash. Then, the camera deadlocks everything, and pans back to Anastasia, stripped to her undies in late '04, looking (I felt) at everything but me. This is where it remained, because Trish's big '06-'07 comeback did a predictable trick of irritating an old wound for Larsen. Yet, in the main, "bros before hos" did manage to rule the roost, and made it so that there was no extended alienation between Larsen and I. The way there was, actually, destined to be extended alienation between myself and Ricky Flint, for what he would always say were a bunch of calculated gambits when Heather Mullen showed up.

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In the Loop...

William Allegrezza & Simone Muench collaborate in *Seven Corners Poetry*.

Gabriel Gudding's *Bed from Government*.

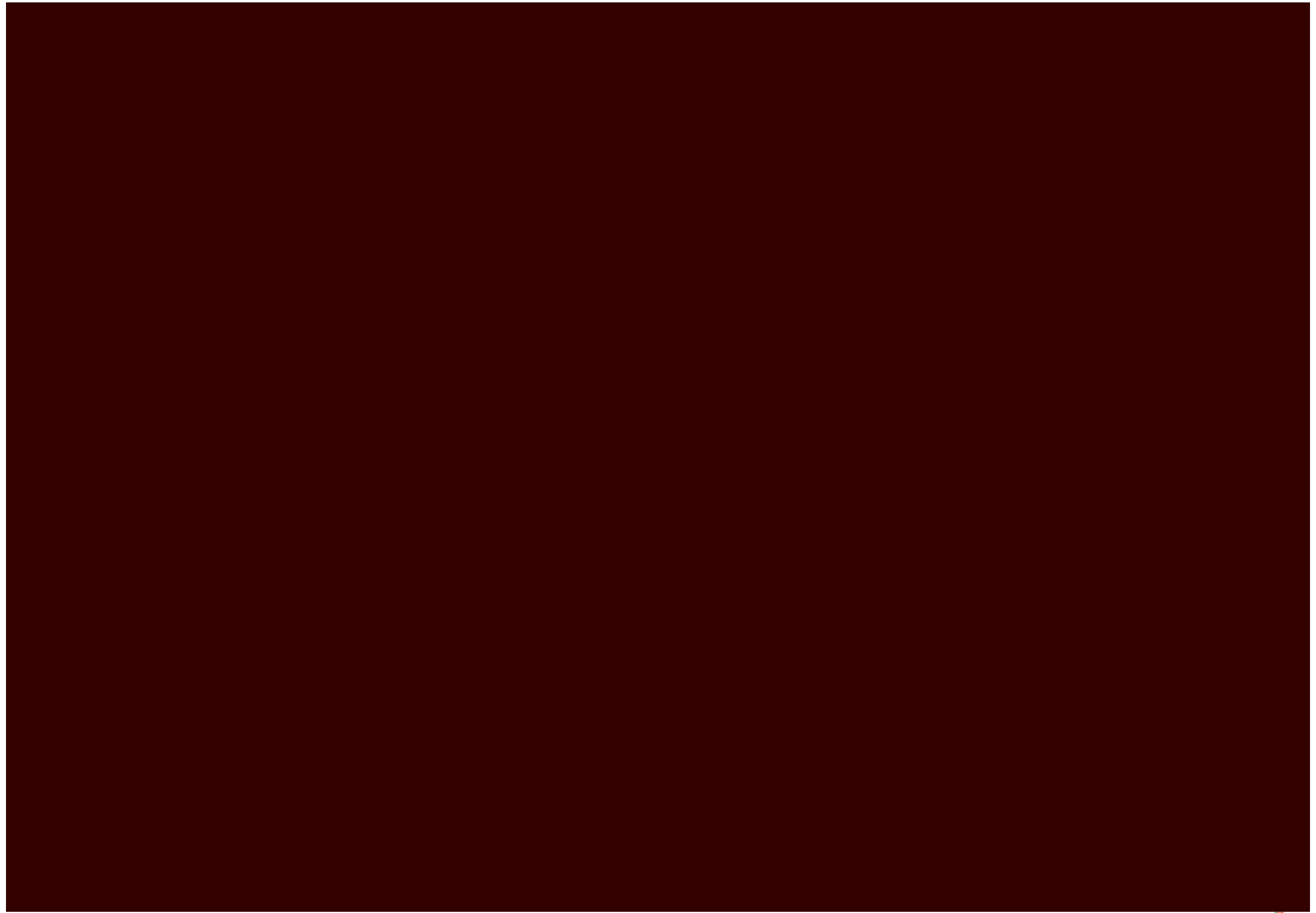
More *Something Solid* in Ink Pantry, Synchronized Chaos, Moss Trill.

Something Solid encompasses, also, *Henniker Heat*.

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa, USA): *Something Solid: Aughts Philly: Portal-ways*

Was it through you, Abby, I managed to do
Queer Studies 101? Here's what I saw: you
aligned yourself with bad girls, to make yourself
look formidable, lived a life of intermittent
lassitude & discipline, tawny head bent down
to study coded missives you dared not decipher,
and then the bittersweet aftermath into postures
you earned for yourself. Girls in a row, a pretense
for an artist of your magnitude. Was that all
you had inside you? I wonder, but it's none of
my business, as the Neo-Classical portal-way
built into your brain hovers around the Earth
for a few centuries, and the paintings themselves
form a row, disciplined, formidable, coded, bittersweet—

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Editor:

- Adam Fieled

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- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa, USA): S...
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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Chris McCabe (London, UK): from *Zeppelins*, "A Proposal"

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

There was a night before a day with no rent when I spoke softly in your ear as you slept: *one day we will get married*. I have never told you this. The heatwave brings out what the winter kept hid. The most extreme since 1911 when *The Times* at last stopped listing the heat-stifled dead. East London was putrid in trapped tanks of air & as the women joined their men marching on Trafalgar Square the open sky was a massive success, a freedom worth fighting for. Those in Liverpool walked out in sympathy & opened the kegs they had lugged for years to drink the contents on the streets. Tomorrow you might walk on as an extra in the film of *Brick Lane*— relocated to Turnpike — & the money you make will go into the fund for the plans we make. Reading John James in bed I am starting to believe that I am here again. You say you are hot but wrap your legs into mine, well there's nothing the breeze from: Shoeburyness — through the curtains and over the dresser — can do about that. *I can't wait for our future together* you say, but when does it start? The night it happened, two weeks ago, I was no more aware of what I was going to say than *would you like more wine?* Ness, our time was then. The kestrel had cut its own shape against the sky like a tattoo on the retina — hovered with no wind — & as the bats, like burned swifts, tried to skirt the subject it was too late: the stars had already put us on the map. *Very quietly & very secretly should we get married?* Between us a glance of vitreous success that wanted to last, as if this piece of Dagenham grass would be our legacy. We waited, holding hands, for the first show of fox. Dogs barked & plotted out the silent tracks she made. Imagined fox gave way to fox — swift on the outhouse, feral, musically-ribbed — all was perfect *this* as she passed. Mongrel Max clambered his trampoline & scared her off. Midnight we found the doors but the walls were too thick — accustomed as we were to the poise of night our home seemed docile, an oafish fist of brick. We went to bed & the rest is this: a cost of one hundred pounds, a catalogue dress at two pounds sixty for 52 weeks. Last night I dreamt us a thumbnail baby with no rollover link but as we

- Chris McCabe (London, UK): from *Zeppelins*, "A Prop...
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looked close we were so pleased with the breaths that it took. Ness, I think we are
starting now. Don't tell anyone until the Summer's gone.

© Chris McCabe 2009

Vladlen Pogorelov (Rocklin, California, USA): from *Derelict*, "No. 112"

The arrival of the greasy day
With its empty cans on the front porch,
Splashes of dirt from passing cars,
Noisy yellow school buses,
A good example of bad taste

The head is a bit heavy
With a thought:
"In every woman there is a lonely a guitar."

In the bathroom,
The yellow teeth of
Somebody
Is still
RE-SEMB-LING
Somebody
Which lived in the last quarter
Of the twentieth...hundreds of years ago
Since a carpenter's son
(Never learned the trade properly)
Was nailed to a wooden symbol
Of a helicopter before...Leonardo
(Performance art >>>>>

A-R-T-Y

J.C. on the cross >>>>>
S-S-S-S-S-S-S-S-S
\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

O.K.

Time to spit out the toothpaste and
Get dressed for just another
Greasy day.

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Andrew Lundwall (Rockford, Illinois, USA): from *Gardening at Night*, "A Rap for Andre Breton"

the shipwreck of the hair follicles of the sun as sung by the phoenix fox choir of
spastic city elastic - turntables like elephant trunks you wish them to be still so -
horseback rode a circle and there you were at the city's limit - she turned her hand
just so when the trees appeared like curious heads at a poker game - she was
absolutely red bobbing head watching the follies on the wall - her boyfriend's got a
sexual projector he plays these video things we all watch amused biting our cuticles
- somewhere a lonesome pitiful man that it's convenient not to recall is turning over
trashcans reeking whiskey trying to recapture a blue obnoxious and jealousy note
that got lost somehow with mustache on - *what is glamorous* was said montgomery
clift as he fell from our television set - she'd poured us both a dixie cup of milk from
the head of a lemur now so her torrential pep talk *broadcast to your little burgundy
soul's bootielicious content please but don't get swallowed up this industry will
laugh hysterically as it slaughters your testicles in the piano keys of infinity*

© Andrew Lundwall 2008

William Allegrezza in...

William Allegrezza in Eratio Postmodern Poetry.

Steve Halle officially sanctioned on Internet Archive.

Brooklyn Copeland's *Northernmost* from Ungovernable Press.

P.F.S. Post to PennSound: State of Grace, Season in Hell: White Candle.

Meeting at St. George's

St. George's in Philadelphia, on 7th Street between South and Bainbridge, was a bar
that had an upstairs which could be used as a performance space. One night in the
late summer of '99, within a few days of shifting to Philadelphia from Manhattan
(briefly stationed in Glenside before the move to 21st and Race), I got the tip-off

that a bunch of acts were putting on a show at St. George's (I was at Philly Java). It was a sultry night, and cloudy, threatening rain. As I ascended the stairs, I looked and saw Matt Stevenson, who I had met at Robin's Books a little less than a year before at the last Siren's Silence reading, hunched over his keyboards/effects boxes rig, and Lora Bloom reciting into a microphone. This early, "pure" version of Radio Eris, as a duo, remains my favorite. Matt was short and stocky, 5'7, wore spectacles, had a slight hobble, and topped it off with a kind of inverse sartorial splendor, making semi-rags look as distinctive as possible. His speaking voice was rich and memorable, and he spoke quickly and articulately, even when stoned, which he often was.

If I felt a certain urgency about talking to Matt at length for the first time, it is because an intuitive call had been sent out from somewhere in the universe to me—Philadelphia was going to be a cultural monster, one way or another, and it was my responsibility (and Matt's, if he cared to join me) to start the ball rolling. This, I knew. I managed to convey this to Matt at the upstairs bar, and began to learn Matt's quirks— even when he was deeply interested (and he was), Matt Stevenson had to be a cynical bastard. It's just that I had him, and I knew it. When we looked at what was happening onstage, it was obvious that magic was in the air— as Dave and Nemon Buckery played, the skylight above them was wild with windy rain and lightning, and the phantasmagoric effect was intense, the little crowd there assembled rapt. It spoke to me as a metaphor for what Philadelphia could be culturally, and it did so with the spacy, chiaroscuro, eerie ambiance of Philadelphia at night I was already familiar with.

Seemingly out of nowhere, Matt and I were joined by a third attendee. He introduced himself as Dan Baker, painter and musician. Dan was another lanky six-footer, with flaming red hair cut into a bob and a red beard to match. Dan was a transplant from Chicago, and (he implied instantly) underworld-consonant. You could feel the dangerous edges all around him. For all of Dan's musical involvements, with Dan (for me) the paintings are the point and, for their elegant simplicity, will eventually come to light. As I left St. George's that night, forced to walk to Market East Station (now Jefferson Station) sans umbrella, I felt something click that was like having a sudden million dollars in the bank. In the days that followed, I moved my stuff from Glenside to 154 North 21st Street. The flat was a studio— but, because the front/facade of the apartment faced east (lots of morning sun) and was all bay windows, and the living room space had loft-level high ceilings, it felt loft-ish the right way. I was to live in "2A" until mid 2008, when I moved around the corner to 23rd and Arch.

I had Matt and Dan's contact info, and other things going on— Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum and I were hosting readings in Philly Java's back-room, where the Siren's

Silence readings had been in '96-'98. Jeremy and I, oddly enough, knew each other from earlier in the Nineties— when, on semester breaks, I would hang out with Chris DeFranco in Manayunk, I met Jeremy and his Villanova-based "d" magazine posse. Jeremy's unique self-presentation— Al Pacino channels Oscar Wilde, in Smiths-land and with a unique set of verbal tics, which manifested also in his work (both poetry and graphic design)— was difficult to forget. The night of St. George's, I had probably started with Jeremy at Java before migrating over. Perhaps St. George's was not posh enough for Jeremy; I had (and have) a ratty streak, and no such scruples. In fact, Aughts Philly depended on most of us having a ratty streak most of the time. A perfect moment in Aughts Philly could happen anywhere, and we were all attuned to that wavelength.

P.F.S.: Triad

There was a night in October 2002 I was recording in South Philadelphia with Radio Eris keyboardist/utility producer Matt Stevenson. What we were recording became the spoken word album *Raw Rainy Fog*. I have described in detail elsewhere precisely what Main Street West (aka Webster Street Studios) at 11th and Webster in South Philadelphia was like; to nut-shell the thing, a lovable hovel. I had picked up some Paisano red wine, because we were to have guests that night— Mary Harju and Abby Heller-Burnham. As of autumn '02, Mary and I were entrenched, and Abby was our constant companion. When they arrived, we smoked the requisite bowl (Matt's weed) from Matt's little marble-textured piece, and I poured the wine. This was, I laugh to remember, rather a mistake— Mary and Abby, together or separately, could hold their pot but not their booze. So, Matt was forced to watch, in semi-bemused fashion, as the two painters disintegrated into cacophonous incoherence and tantrum-like upset. They were a tumultuous pair; and, a few months after that (February '03), they moved into a two bedroom flat in a complex on 42nd Street off of Baltimore Avenue in West Philadelphia, where Mary had lived for a few years already at the pictured 4325 commune. I was Mary's *hubs*, and there constantly.

One nuance to remember about Mary and Abby, as a Dynamic Duo— Mary, through a rigorous and rigorously enforced regimen of scant, vegetarian eating, was always perfectly thin, if still rather more big-boned up close than one would think; Abby Heller-Burnham's weight was always fluctuating between extreme thinness and chunkiness. Her quandary was clear— the better she was painting, the more she liked to eat. Mary had a height advantage, as well— her Grace Kelly-like near 5'8 (later matched, precisely, by Hannah Miller) to Abby's elfin five feet even. The flat itself was nondescript— a large kitchen/living room space (the kitchen had an

island), flanked by bedrooms on either side. No serious painting could be done there — Abby and Mary both had studios elsewhere. Because Mary had a hubs, she was given the larger, master bedroom, as we alternated apartments night by night as usual (I was still at 21st and Race). An important facet of Abby's personality which became visible at this time was her slow-burn Virgo temper— she was pissed at Mary's marriage to me, and harbored a secret grievance that she (the reason wasn't important) deserved the master bedroom. It's just that they both knew by then (without necessarily verbalizing it) what it would take me a number of years to realize for myself—Abby Heller-Burnham was a greater artist than Mary Harju. She was more inventive, imaginative, and formally rigorous, building on French Neo-Classicalists Ingres and David from a firm base of solid contemporary engagement, while Mary settled for aping the Renaissance and hoping for the best. What was simmering in them in '03 was a congeries of all these issues.

We all enjoyed ourselves in that apartment for a while. We could all sing, so that spring we conceived the idea of writing and rehearsing some tunes. Perhaps Matt could record us at Main Street West or we could play a few clubs. The material we compiled over a few months was intriguing, including a nod to Sister Lovers-era Big Star called "She Slit Her Wrists." We managed to play out together, sans name, precisely once in the summer of '03. It was upstairs at Book Trader, then still at 5th and South, at an event coordinated by Brian Patrick Heston, who was a benevolent presence for us then, and his posse. I'm sure we sounded like lunatics, but a good time was had by all. In the middle of all this, On Love and Hamlet On Pine Street appeared in Hinge Online, *Icarus in New York* in American Writing; Mary and I were still studying at Penn; I did several readings at the Kelly Writers House on the Penn campus; and Mary and I were planning, and then taking, our trip to Montreal. I was moving, in my writing, away from the Romantic pastiches of '01/'02 towards a kind of groping around (recuperating, especially, the odal form) for a resolutely contemporary voice yet mindful of Romanticism's lessons. Abby, who had then begun *The Skaters*, was performing roughly the same aesthetic task.

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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Mary Walker Graham (Boston, USA): "A Pit, A Broken Jaw, A Fever"

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

When I say pit, I'm thinking of a peach's. As in *James and the Giant*, as in: the night
has many things for a girl to imagine. The way the flesh of the peach can never be
extricated, but clings— the fingers follow the juice. The tongue proceeds along the
groove. Dark peach: become a night cavern— an ocean's inside us— a balloon for
traveling over. When I said *galleons of strong arms without heads*, I meant natives,
ancient. I meant it takes me a long time to get past the hands of men; I can barely
get to their elbows. How a twin bed can become an anchor. How a balloon floating
up the stairwell can become a person. Across the sea of the hallway then, I floated. I
hung to the fluorescent fixtures in the bathroom, I saw a decapitated head on the
toilet. I'll do anything to keep from going in there. I only find the magazines under
the mattress, the Vaseline in the headboard cabinet. A thought so hot you can't
touch it. A pit. A broken jaw. A fever.

© Mary Walker Graham 2007

- Mary Walker Graham (Boston, USA): "A Pit, A Broken..."
- Brian Kim Stefans (Los Angeles, California, USA): ...
- Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): from Map of...
- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvani...
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- Derelict Part 2: Siren's Silence
- Preface: Derelict (1997): Vladlen Pogorelov
- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvani...
- Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): Blackbirds ...

Brian Kim Stefans (Los Angeles, California, USA): "Complaint of Pierrot"

from *Laforge*

Oh, that model soul
bade me her adieu
because my eyes...too?
lacked principle.

She, such tender bread
(now a Wonder loaf)
...typical! gives birth

Contributors

- Adam Fieled



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to one more brat.

For, married, she is
always with a guy
who *is* a “nice guy,”
hence his genius.

© Brian Kim Stefans 2007

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Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): from *Map of the Hydrogen World: "to 3rd grade John who liked motorcycles"*

for Roy Nathanson

john who liked motorcycles did it *again*,
wet his pants *again* (i found out later
he had a catheter) the other boys smelled
it and shot insults from across the classroom
like “hey pissy boy” or “smells like a urinal
in here” i sat next to john so i smelled
piss too but i didn’t mind so much
i talked to John and he laughed
so i knew he hadn’t heard the other guys
yet but my nostrils were giving out
and i couldn’t breathe for the urine
but i’ve got to keep talking
but i’m running out of things to say!
i fake it i tell jokes quote movies anything—
gibberish voices vaudeville
john’s laughing harder now and the asshole
boys disappear blurring
into their desks until all i can hear
is my own voice speaking in tongues
and John roaring, reeking of piss.
it was my first poem.

© Steve Halle 2008

George,

Strange dream last night. I was in bed all over again, in my apartment. I awoke, in the dream, to find Jena Strayner crawling across the floor, not far from the bed, as though she were a caterpillar. Only, she was a brunette this time, and didn't look older than ten years old. Her face remained unchanged. I asked her what she was doing here. She slithered backwards slightly, propped herself up on her elbows, looked me dead in the face, and said, "Because you are my husband, I am eternally damned." The feeling in the air was charged with menace. I felt something issue from her head, land next to the couch. It was a kind of whirligig— a congeries of raw consciousness data to fall into, veering off into the insanity of perceived damnation. I had an ESP moment, and knew that she was anticipating her death, in her mind's eye. But because she was ten years old, a brunette, and a caterpillar, all the menace-n-macabre crap in the air was charged also, with a tinge of the absurd. The sting of it was that when I woke, I did feel a strange energy in the apartment, a sense of the whirligig being real. I did live through my share of macabre moments with Ms. Strayner. What could be more macabre than room 510 of the Atherton Hilton? Or up-all-night in a trailer in Liverpool, Harrisburg 'burbs?

In waking news: with Dana now flaunting the guy she's seeing, I'm left to scope out other diversions. One is Kris, who I've finally been able to establish contact with. While she was unchaining her bike today, I managed to talk to her about a pertinent issue— the Grind no longer has a permit to allow outside seating. This means that we have to drag chairs from inside outside, on the few warm sparkling autumn days we have left. Today is one. Kris, up close, is vastly more sardonic (and shrewish) than Dana is. With her voluptuous proportions, she actually reminds me a little of Liz Taylor in *Taming of the Shrew*. The difference is that Shakespeare's Kate has no real sense of irony; Kris does. Kris has in her eyes that knowingness which says, quite plainly, once I've seen you with your pants off, I own you; once I own you, you become so magnificently ridiculous that you're to be held in my back pocket (nowhere else) interminably. If you want to call Dana and Kris the Doublemint Twins, Kris is certainly the more sinister of the two twins. What redeems her is honesty. Dana's veneer of niceness is always holding her back, especially considering how transparent it is. Kris just scoffs and rolls her eyes. Salt on the surface.

One thing that is worth saying about Dana Blasconi: she comes from country stock, but she is by no means a typical country girl. True country girls always err towards the timid, the meek. They lack gumption, nerve in general. For Dana Blasconi to begin in the sticks, and wind up kicking serious ass (hokey contrivances and all), as she does here at the Grind in Center City Philly, bespeaks unusual

courage, and an equally unusually robust sense of self. Dana didn't settle for the country deal at all. I can't not link her in my mind to Jena Strayner, who superficially partook of country life, all its lack of amenities. Jumping into a shotgun marriage which included all kinds of pornography-worthy sex, with the damned degenerate who happens to be writing this missive, was about raw courage, country values be damned. Jena Strayner belonged in Center City Philly as much as Dana does. Just as Dana belongs...anyway, both of them earn, for whatever it's worth, kudos from me about what it means to rebel fruitfully in the world, whatever stump-dumb aegis you happen to begin under. By staking a big claim on living a big life, however much I criticize them in my writing (this applies more to Dana), criticism will always be tempered by warmth and admiration.

By the way, Chip did finally show up today. We got, unfortunately, into a rather nasty argument. Chip is one of those semi-artist meatheads who insist (and it is a very American position) that an artist should be judged by the size of his or her audience. So, Bruce Springsteen becomes better than Beethoven, Allen Ginsberg superior to John Keats, and the Abstract Expressionists ride high over Goya. Chip even goes far enough to say that Bruce rivals Ludwig in musical complexity. I hit him with every imaginable jab — what art is to me (which has, built into, layers of snobbery which I embrace), what constitutes cultural hierarchies that actually work (over centuries), why America has seldom been taken seriously by world artists (and Larsen). I know, of course, what the subtext of Chip's argument is— I'm every bit the artist you are, and my opinions matter as much as yours. Well, no they don't. At the crucial, culminating moment, I revealed to Chip that 1) he is not an artist, 2) he's not even as good as I am at playing rock music, 3) his opinions on the arts, particularly the higher arts, are all hokey contrivances that are by no means commensurate with mine (I did lay it on thick). He got up abruptly (we were sitting outside), told me he'd never talk to me again, and drove off. I saw the man clearly, as I never had before; behind all his thought, the imperative to compete (on all levels and in all ways); the presumption of equality (misapplied to a realm in which there is no equality); and the philistinism that informs both post-modern art and rock music. America, Larsen says: more freedom, but among kiddies.

There's an anti-climactic feel to the Grind these days. Little dramas develop, coalesce, sputter into nothing. Tensions play themselves out on subterranean levels. People don't say too much, and what they say often amounts to a series of non sequiters. Also, the simple (but very painful) truth: I miss being young. My body of work sits on my back like Baudelaire's chimera. It also takes the form of a long-suffering mistress, requiring sorely needed, seldom received attention. But lovers and friends and contexts also create bodies of work, and at a certain saturation point you find yourself gazing blankly at a pile of bodies. To the extent that I can tolerate the sensation, I take my scalpel to the distempered parts of all these

bodies, including my own. I can do dish about all this human stuff, but then art levels squish into it and the whole thing becomes a palpitating mess. I made the choice as a young man to surround myself with artists; this is surely my just dessert. Blue icing? Sometimes. But at least as hearty as Trish's eight thousand ways to do rice-and-vegetables.

Sauteed,
Adam

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Chris McCabe (London, UK): from *Zeppelins: The Transmidland Liverpool to London Express (sonnets in simultaneous time): Hightown*

In a dark dark town there was a dark
dark street. Down the dark dark street
there was a dark dark pub. In the dark
dark pub there was a dark dark shelf.
On the dark dark shelf there was a book
called *Competition & Monopoly*. Reproduction
mustachioed Mona Lisa splattered with the
house gravy. We took an axe to the
Constitution Club. Say cheers with a Guinness
sounds like a marble medley of black
snooker balls. Twelve the maximum.
Take this cover-up on a city with issues:
Mr. Thornton with his strap-on choc cock.
In a dark dark town there was a dark dark

© Chris McCabe 2008

P.F.S. Reading Habits

The main Philly Free School participants were all idiosyncratic. Because she was a tall, leggy blonde who liked fashion (for instance), many Philadelphians would stop at the surface and assume Mary Evelyn Harju ended there. Then, they would see the paintings and make an amended judgment. Yet, the complexity and richness of Mary's character went deeper than just her paintings. Mary was an avid reader, and made a fetish of Victorian novels. Among her favorites, *Wuthering Heights*, which

she frequently re-read, seems to have made the deepest impression on her. She approved of the Catherine Earnshaw Romantic ideal, and loved the dramatic intensity of deep-set longing and tempestuous passion. Naturally, the Bronte sisters worked for her as well, and her imaginative life was stimulated by what enchantments nineteenth century Britain had to offer, specifically for women. Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Keats we shared— down to the fact that Mary claimed not to understand free-verse. This meant, of course, that anything I wrote which was not strictly formalist tended to go over her head. Since her paintings were largely Renaissance-derived, from her habits I learned that the two periods— Regency/Victorian England and the Renaissance— constituted a cognitive bedrock foundation for her art and life. Texts addressing depictions of Jesus in Renaissance art were of particular interest for her. Because her imagination was fertile and she read constantly, Mary was also able to churn out first-rate academic writing when she needed to. So, the Grace Kelly veneer had much more beneath it than acquaintances thought, on this and other fronts.

As was disappointing for Mary and I, Abby Heller-Burnham was not a reader. She couldn't be— Abby was plagued with a kind of visual dyslexia which made it impossible for her to focus on texts. Numbers on pages and certain word sequences drove her crazy. When I bonded with Abs, it could be about music or her teaching me about visual art; she never showed any real interest in my writing. Fortunately, we were both absorbed in the same social nexuses and activities, including P.F.S., so I didn't notice that much. Her dedication both to French Neo-Classicism and Queer Studies was both obvious, and a unique combination.

Matt Stevenson, being an avid reader of science fiction and comic books, also had a catholic streak about literature and could enjoy anything well-written and intelligent. Thus, when I would occasionally do a reading at Tritone or the Highwire with Matt accompanying me with his keyboards/effects pedals rig, his choices, from piece to piece, were always thoughtful and germane. Matt's intelligence had a polished quality which made an amusing contrast with his ragamuffin appearance. What was habitual about Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum on these levels was a contradiction. He had an English degree from Villanova; had already founded and edited a successful literary journal ("d") from Villanova and Manayunk; and had established himself as a publishing poet on a national level, from Philadelphia. Literary jargonese was perpetually on his tongue— anaphora, enjambment, parallel structure, etc. He championed my poetry and his critiques were helpful. It's just that Jeremy had a books problem— he didn't like them very much. Pound he stuck to as to an obligation (the English department at Villanova being crammed with furious, inchoate Poundians). Yet it was impossible not to notice, as the Aughts progressed, that Jeremy's affair with literature had soured. Once the split with literature, by

2004, was made concrete, Jeremy could be seen with random, obscure texts in public (usually avant-novels in the vein of Pynchon, John Barthes, for instance) and not much else. It also needs to be stated that much of the poetry Jeremy published, in the Columbia Poetry Review and elsewhere, is interesting enough to merit consideration. But when he moved to video, photography, and graphic design, the move was more or less final. He did still have a gig drafting proposals for Venturi, Scott, and Brown in Manayunk; I met Robert Venturi through him in the mid-Aughts, who even bothered to come once to a P.F.S. Highwire show; but Jeremy needed personal space around him which literature impinged upon.

I myself picked a BA and two graduate degrees in English Literature over the course of the Aughts. This meant that I was reading constantly. I managed to assimilate the entire history of poetry and literature in the English language, from Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder to Tom Eliot to Thom Gunn to (Thomas) Pynchon. Yet the movement wound up being a circular one, in that I finished where I had started in the early Aughts— leaning heavily on the major English Romantics (sans Blake) and Milton, and not much else. Philosophy I had done a mountain of at PSU, with literary theory under its aegis, and a mid-Aughts foray into Deconstructionism proved fruitful, as did a lyric nod to Logical Positivism. Thousands of pages academic criticism did not leave too marked an impression, and academic scholarship ("scholarly rigor") left an unpleasant taste in my mouth, much of the time. I was also, of necessity, steeped in the work of my precise contemporaries, writers born in the 60s, 70s, and 80s; out of this arose this, P.F.S. Post (Philly Free School Post), and avid readers can decide for themselves how relevant this is.

Derelict Part 2: Siren's Silence

If I am going to discuss the arts journal [Siren's Silence](#), and what it meant for Philadelphia in the Nineties, one salient point needs to be made first. Most of the dramas which lit up Siren's Silence, both as a literary entity and as a scene, were invisible to me as a second-tier player in them. Vlad Pogorelov, Dawn Morpurgo, Lora Bloom, Christian Hand and the rest were all dramatic personalities; moreover, the social world they inhabited was a dramatic one. I was only able to see what I saw on semester breaks and visits home from State College. What, thus, I can relate about Siren's Silence, is partial and fragmentary at best. Here is the narrative of what I did see: I discovered, on a semester break, an open mike night happening at Philly Java Company on 4th Street between South and Lombard in South Philadelphia in (I think it was) spring '97. I began attending the open mike night as regularly as I could. It became clear to me that the open mikes in the back room of Philly Java were there

to represent the interests of a print arts journal called Siren's Silence, which I became a regular contributor to. It took some time going to these open mikes to begin to differentiate personalities. The first Siren's Silence character I noticed who made a substantial impression on me was Vladlen ("Vlad") Pogorelov.

Vlad was different. Average height, very thin, prematurely balding, very dapper, and he talked with a thick Russian accent. The material Vlad was writing, like No. 105, which was published in '97 in the classic chapbook *Derelict*, had much in common with the urban, gritty realism of Charles Bukowski, and I told Vlad as much. His signature poems were about whores, drugs, poverty, and drunkenness, and (oddly enough) they demonstrated an impressive formalist streak which (one would think) Bukowski would have hated. To hear Vlad recite, "The dirty whore/ takin a bath/ smokin crack/ singing songs from time to time" in his thick Russian brogue was a distinctly otherworldly experience. Vlad was the poetry editor of Siren's Silence at the time. Other poems he had around, like *At the Train Station*, detailed a sensibility which, if a little long on adolescent romanticism, still had a flavor of imaginative decay, artful deterioration, which made them memorable to me. Oddly, Vlad sometimes appeared at Philly Java with his mother. There was talk that he had a trust fund, or was from a rich Russian family; I was never able to find out. In the intervening years, I have found ways to tip the hat to Mr. Pogorelov; in the Virtual Pinball section of *Beams* ("Nicanor Parra/Jimmy Page/Yossarian..."), and in Apparition Poem #509 ("on greasy days in Philadelphia...").

Lora Bloom I came to know later as the vocalist of Radio Eris, her collaboration with my own friend and future producer Matt Stevenson. Jeannine Campbell was around the Philadelphia arts scene also for many years, but we didn't make much contact; Dawn Morpurgo same. When the final issue of Siren's Silence was released in late '98, which featured Clean, I happened to be home from State College, about to shift over to Manhattan, so I went. It was at Robin's Books, on 13th Street off of Walnut, upstairs. I had seen Vlad read that spring behind *Derelict* at Pi on South Street in South Philly again, but Vlad wasn't there. If my disappointment was overcome, it's because I found a group of pick-up friends who set me up with some free Valiums. Even more serendipitous was my encounter with Matt Stevenson, who would play such a pivotal role for all of us in the Aughts. This is the truth....you must believe me. Matt needed (for some reason) a copy of the Doors first album, and I happened to have the cassette in my pocket. I handed it over to him, and thus sealed the deal that when I returned to Philadelphia a year later, after all the Manhattan Babel, pieces would fall into place which could start a revolution. Siren's Silence advertised itself as a literary explosion; if so, the explosion cleared some crucial space (as did Jeremy's "d") for everything which followed the one century ending and the next jumping into being, from Philadelphia on out. And into 2024.

P.S. Worth noting that Siren's Silence stalwart Christian Hand attended Poetry Incarnation '05.

Preface: *Derelict* (1997): Vladlen Pogorelov

Whatever history books might have to say about the Nineties, it was a time marked, I felt then and still feel now, by a spirit of unity which prevailed among the youth population of the United States. From the Alternative Revolution in popular music (and attendant spectacles, like Lollapalooza) to a revolution in fashion which favored androgyny and made bisexuality and gayness hip, Nineties kids often led lives joined together by golden threads— shared pastimes and experiences which made their lives workable. Such was my life, too. So, the night in April 1997 when I walked into the Philly Java Company in South Philadelphia and was told that, as was serendipitous for me, a reading was going on in the comfortably furnished back room, a new golden thread sewed together the beginnings of another chapter in my life as a nascent poet. One that followed me, also, back to State College.

The reading was, of course, hinged to the Nineties Philadelphia poetry journal Siren's Silence. More than just a journal which published edgy, avant-garde leaning poetry and visual art (evincing, also, a prescient sense of multi-media), Siren's Silence embodied a sharply defined ethos— live fast, live hard, and live like you mean it. Of all the characters I chanced to meet from the Siren's Silence crowd in '97 and '98, Vlad(len) Pogorelov was the most memorable. When his first collection appeared in '97, *Derelict*, which you have here in your hands, it consolidated for me that Vlad was more than just a poet of note; he was the first poet in my age group (slightly older) to manifest and sustain a compelling voice for the length of a book. "At the Train Station" was, and remains, my personal favorite— a poem convincingly personal, convincingly sensual, provocative, but also (as is important) not afraid to take the English language and make it *sing*, man. Because Vlad hailed from another country, he might not have realized what I knew then, and remember now— the entire twentieth century had passed, both in the United States and Europe, in which all the spark, all the musicality had been drained out of English-language poetry and poetic language, and been replaced with something very cold, very flat. *Dull*. Vlad sang with passion, at the top of his lungs, and instinctively employed, both in "Train Station" and elsewhere, all the seductive tricks of lyricism, as American poetry had buried— rhyme, near-rhyme, assonance. Such music even Whitman never knew.

I was reminded, also, of Charles Bukowski by *Derelict*, with its gritty realism and emphasis on subterranean urban life— dirty whores, drunkenness, poverty. The protagonist of *Derelict* and the protagonist of Bukowski's poetry share many

complexes, impulses, neuroses, and tastes, from a love of classical music to a distaste for the mainstream of human life in general. In fact, it wasn't always easy to ascertain then, during the *Derelict* era of the late Nineties, and as an aspiring poet myself, to what extent Mr. Pogorelov wanted to remain in the margins. By late '98, he had packed up all his things and moved to the West Coast, leaving Philadelphia without making too full of an impression, as I moved to Manhattan from State College and then hop-scotched back to Philly. Was the warm, cozy ending of "No. 103" really indicative— is this a literary protagonist who could master his demons? And where did Mr. Pogorelov separate from the protagonist in his best poems, like "103" (an issue which reaches past Bukowski, down centuries, to Byron and out)? In those days, I thought I would never know; yet now I do, as Vlad reappears to reclaim what's his. The ultimate demon, as we read in *Derelict*, is time itself— wearing us down, taking our epiphanies and making them both feel and appear worthless. Now that the time has come for *Derelict* to emerge again, a flagship Nineties literary talisman reborn, we see exactly who Vladlen Pogorelov is— not only a good, strong, solid, authentic poet, but a poet who *means it*, man. And there are never many of those around.

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Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, USA): *Letters to Dead Masters: #27*

George,

I am overhearing Tibby talk to one of his fiction-writing friends on his cell-phone. The subject of his phone-call is "falls from grace"— who's fallen, who hasn't. In literature, there are any number of ways to fall— you can publish the wrong things at the wrong time, be too famous or not famous enough, shoot too many arrows at too many moving targets or forget to defend yourself. Tibby happens to be discussing the arrow-shooters; guys who create toxic social contexts and destroy themselves in the process. Ironically, this is precisely how I perceive Tibby. "With guys like this, you just have to walk away," he says. Tibby, as usual, projects onto other artists what he doesn't want to see in himself; but I see Tibby' projection as representative of a larger problem. To put the matter bluntly, artists in 2010 America have largely gone Republican, owing to the subconscious influence of one Dick Cheney (pants-wearer) and his jack George W. Bush. The Republican syndrome in American artists manifests in two ways: 1) an inability to see art in any but the most crassly competitive terms, and 2) a complete and totalized unwillingness to change on any

level. This widely manifested syndrome has turned the arts, willy-nilly, into a charnel ground; a damned, God-forsaken locale. The cruel irony is that a majority of artists (like Tibby) consider themselves to be liberal. It's a generation sickness that spans three generations; and it makes mince-meat of any American "ideals" that artists could think to propagate. Heather Mullen's nightmare. Tibby and I do small-talk, and the subtext never changes; he pretends to know less about myself and my work than he actually does. His biz is parasitic and voyeuristic. Yawn.

I just had to repel a kind of attack. A tall, thin, balding guy in his (I'm guessing) fifties with a moustache and a plethora of arm-tattoos invited himself to sit down at my table and smoke a cigarette. I put him off by telling him I'm "working." I am, and part of my work is digging through the "Fall Arts" issue of one of the weekly free shit-rags. I'm stunned: there's no literature in this at all. It's all theater, painting, pop music. Philly is, after all, a fiercely illiterate city. People here pride themselves on what (and how much) they don't know. And here comes Tibby again, and it looks like he's got big news. It is this: one of his friends (an NYC guy) scored a movie deal with his latest opus. Of course, this is something I have no chance of competing with. Tibby presents the data to me as a *fait accompli*, but I know that most movie deals fall through. Tibby's two objectives: to fill up his accustomed vacuum of hollow space (he's not writing, scrounging, wife preggings) and to make me feel as small and worthless as possible. If I have an objective, it's only to gather anecdotes towards a comprehensive summary of human foibles. I'm willing to be complicit with Tibby: I flinch at apropos moments. Tibby, incidentally, carries his body like a befuddled twelve-year-old forced to carry six feet and one-hundred seventy pounds. His wardrobe evinces hipsterism reduced to bare essentials— faded blue-jeans, tight tee-shirt. His speech conveys the know-it-all assurance of burgeoning adolescence. In other words, he's a man-child. The DJs aren't that different; immaturity, after all, fuels the cheap competitiveness and totalized stasis that have made a charnel ground of this place, too. Interactions like this used to shake me; but when you begin to look beyond yourself, they become easier to bear. For the real players, there are even interesting levels to self-absorption— you are absorbed in yourself, while also engaged in acts of self-transcendence. In this mode, you can get past button-pushing and see into the life of things. Tibby thinks that writing a novel is just pushing buttons— here's something that looks symbolic, something that seems penetrating, something with "universal resonance." He's a show-off, fishing for praise. Vast, mighty, ephemeral careers have been built from button-pushing. Real literature erupts when an artist starts to fumble— Audrey Cope said that. It's fun to do these arabesques while waiting to see if Dana eventually shows up (I still don't have her cell number). Sometimes I feel like tossing my entire enterprise aside just to gawk at the sky. The Grind could use a little sky in it.

Well, Dana finally showed up alright. She was a little off-kilter, a little askew, and also a little mischievous. A bunch of whispered conversations ensued, and, from a gesture Kris made, I sussed what the point must've been— Dana is coyly leading everyone who needs to know to believe that she just gave one of the DJs a blowjob. Sigh. Am I a little tender, about this stuff? Yeah. Julie Hayes once claimed to have given twenty guys blowjobs over the course of one summer. Guys who will never eat, I trust, desert mushrooms again. Yikes. Well, get over it. She probably just sold him some dope. Who knows? I hope she really did it. Once again, I do the yeoman's task of walking in the park, dancing in the dark, and reminiscing. To me (I say, to the assembled throng of 19th century bards), Heather Mullen (her again) was always the quintessential Master of Disaster (MOD) around fellatio; was, in fact, a High Mod. She thus displayed mastery of craft-skills related to fellatio and emotional dispossession, streams of consciousness, skewered perspectives, not to mention an artful sense of fracturing. It remains to be seen, I incise spitefully, if Dana displays such mastery. Inbuilt also, for Ms. Mullen: the deconstructive impulse, the definitive conviction that "there is nothing outside the sex." That's the thesis of *Equations*, anyway, right? Not to mention Reception Velocity, like on the Internet. The irony of the High Mod girl; she sucks.

Deep in my own desert mushroom trance, I can't not hit Trish again. Killer instincts aside, Trish's hardcore fellatio Romanticism was about an ideal, a belief; that we were two souls interlocked, moving through our private and privatized universe together. Sincerely. And she was wildly lyrical, orally. She found me mad, bad, and dangerous to blow; but it worked. The music was electric. Trish was Psyche, she was Helen, she was Penelope. Not to mention Venus, Athena, Maud Gonne, Fanny Brawne. And Traci Lords. Phantasmagoric, in a way that Heather Mullen could never be; but short, as it were on irony. Dana Blasconi need not apply.

Sky-Clad,
Adam

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Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): *Blackbirds* (finale)

yoga for insomnia, yoga for narcolepsy

so much for the Hippocratic oath

nutritionists and fashionistas

become unarmed Sandinistas

teach the populace to toggle
between adoration and revulsion:
a waif-like waist line
or Anna Nicole's Olympian bust line?

some of the chosen
merely sit & breathe
while others bustle
over concrete shapes
of themselves or relatives
frozen in a blast
of furnace ash

journeyman doctors
reach the end
of the mind and find
Tiresias but no palm
empty pillboxes but
no donkey, no praise
of no immortal soul

sing softly until I end

my song never
reaches top forty

neither Anna Nicole
nor Kate Moss
will ever love
me, neither, in life
nor in death

regard the posture:
posture is all posturing

on the Big Time Dating Show Leading Always to Sex,
Tiresias waits
behind the silk curtain
with a copper coffer
containing a self-devouring snake,

all sinew and shimmering scale

for the next *Oprah*

after choosing a mate,
Tiresias lounges
beneath Egyptian cotton longing
for the androgynous
mate who has slipped into
something more
comfortable

& old body parts
hidden like lotus petals unfold
hormonally altered by pills
his beauty half-withered
her member half-hard

Postscript

Money's better.
Car's on the fritz.
Selling a kidney.
Explain later...

© Steve Halle 2008

Vlad Pogorelov (Rocklin, California, USA): from *Derelict: Under Those Roofs* (a children's poem for grown-ups)

For C. Hewins

A city with three million roofs
Was fifty miles wide
Somewhere under those roofs
They had a place to hide

He— was a man

Or maybe a boy,
Or maybe he was a she
It's not important who he was
We never met for tea

He had his roof,
He had his floor,
Besides he had a cat
And when the day would go to sleep
They would both go to bed

She— had a room
Under the roof
And underneath the floor
The roofs had the color of the sun,
The spider and the moon

We met that night
I saw the sun, the spider
And the moon
And since I was there by myself
She let me see some more
And then I saw myself and her
Both laying on the floor
Under the colors of the sun,
The spider and the moon
And when I left her she was asleep
We never met again

Tired
Happy
Loved
She was laying
On her back
She didn't moan anymore, and yet
She was alive
Wrapped in the pleasures of her dreams
Of a dying candlelight

He— thought of a wife

He never had,
Of children who are not there
And then he lighted a cigarette
To drive away the despair
And it was quiet outside
“It must be night,” he said,
Life is too short
The nights are long
Its time to be in bed

He petted his cat,
He brushed his teeth,
And finally went to sleep
I hope, maybe in his dreams
His soul will not weep

She was asleep
A long time ago
The time was passing by
And though they never met each other
They’d never say “Good-bye”

A city with three million roofs
Is fifty miles wide
Somewhere under those roofs
We all have a place to hide

© Vlad Pogorelov 1997



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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Andrew Lundwall (Rockford, Illinois, USA): from *Gardening at Night: Aftermath*

threatening

the cards with pictures

of our smiles pasted on

slide across the table

single file

my inability to anchor

makes everything go wrong

it's not how old i am

it's how old i feel

gone to numb

be back in an hour

the hospital of all our tears

is cranked up with silly gas

is vomiting potatoes and jello

is under the shocked glow of electrocuted lights

i can't make any promises

i can't make it to a meeting

they don't want me on the premises

all that i *can* seem to do

is write some stupid manifesto

that i hope someone someday'll read

we're communicating by sign language now

the house is very quiet in a foreign tongue

my language won't let me take exile anywhere

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

Artist Posts

- Philly Free School: Thug-ism
- Philly Free School: Class, more
- Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa): "Appar..."
- Jenny Kanzler: Things Beneath the Surface 2
- Barry Schwabsky's song of himself
- Robert Archambeau: Rhizomes and more
- A long letter from JET (Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum)
- Chris McCabe (London, UK): fragment from The Nuptials
- Alexandra Grilikhes (Philadelphia, USA): "Vacation"
- Abby Heller-Burnham: from Art Odyssey: Artist's St...

Contributors

- Adam Fieled



Archives

October 2005 November 2005 December 2005 January 2006 February 2006 March 2006 April 2006 May 2006 July 2006 August 2006 January 2007 February 2007 March 2007 April 2007 May 2007 June 2007 July 2007 August 2007 November 2007 December 2007 January 2008 February

it's best to keep quiet don't wake the place
that preface that wouldn't have us to begin with

© Andrew Lundwall 2008

Mary Walker Graham (Boston, USA): "At St. Baume"

It was a dimple of comfort:
sleeping long months,
forgetting. I must have dreamed

the ocean and its shore—
a chaos of gulls as the craft
pushed off: galleons

of strong arms without heads.
I leaned heavy toward shelter,
filling my own sails.

Now the smell of damp hair,
crusts of secretions. Something iron
that makes teeth clench

and the walls grow mold.
It was my own blood, finally.
When I woke I remembered

those last circles— how
the she-wolf turns and turns
before collapsing on stone.

© Mary Walker Graham 2007

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, USA): from *Something Solid: Aughts Philly: Genius Loci*

West Philly swung, night by night, around all of us.
I couldn't not notice— Diana was delicately gorgeous.

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She spent lots of time in the room next door.
One night, deep into the wee hours, & as
the entire house tripped (taken off, it
seemed, into distant universes, sucked into
black holes, or even flipped the switch into
primordial ooze & chaos), I swung dumbly
into Kevin's open door, found Diana tripping
on the bed, in tee & panties. As I sat down
on the bed, all that occurred to me was to
follow my instincts. The *genius loci* of that
place & time was all about nothing else, &
the sense that Diana, whose elegant lashes

& sculpted cheekbones belied her wildness,
existed as an archetype I came to worship
at the shrine of, even as music roared from
down the wood-floored hall, Mary & Abby
slept on the other side. I ascertained, later,
Diana, who I hadn't known before, had changed
her name, to stake a claim, against missing other ladies'
fun. She would become an arriviste for me, later,
also, once the two stalwarts were out of the way.
Hopefully, foggy memories would make me hesitant
to claim knowledge, more than stunted, of her
bellicose, venom-bordered insides, of a stunted child,
Lolita as painted by Goya. Lolita painted by Goya,
however, is still Lolita. Nothing child-like in that wildness.

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Chard deNiord (Putney, Vermont, USA): "Club Erebus"

Death is the Mother of Beauty.

Wallace Stevens

They emerged from a door that wasn't a door
and floated across the room to the stage
which they ascended and began to sway
and bend and turn with only their g-strings on.

I sat at the bar drinking gin and smoking
a cigar, watching them work beneath
the lights, accept the funds of happy men
who took great care in folding their bills
like miniature towels inside their belts
around their thighs that went *k'ching*,
k'ching, until a ring of bills adorned
their thighs and the music stopped
for a moment, long enough for them
to disappear into the dark of the high
stone door at the end of the stage
where they waved *goodbye*, *goodbye*,
and then were gone beneath the world
like the ghosts they were, to rest for a while,
the longest time, before returning live
to die again as they had before.

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On Jordan Stempleman's *Facings*

When comparisons regarding poetry and poets become an issue, it is easy to remember a cliché that, in the manner of the best clichés, always seems applicable: *comparisons are odious*. Yet comparing things is both central to poetic practice (for those of us hardy enough to go in for a good simile or metaphor now and then) and critical practice as well. Put simply, comparisons are how a vigorous literary mind works. We are able to make sense of what is new by comparing it to older things. It works if you reverse the equation, too; as T.S. Eliot noted in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” remarkable new works transform and transmute our conceptions of older masterpieces (if we posit that there are, in fact, poems good enough to be considered general masterpieces.)

It would seem that, if comparisons are odious, we, as poets and critics, had better get used to the unpleasant smell of ourselves and of others. Or, we could throw the cliché out the window, working under the assumption that throwing clichés out the window is part of our job anyway. That’s probably better.

All these issues have been going through my head as I’ve read, re-read, and re-read Jordan Stempleman’s *Facings*, which was put out by Otoliths in 2007. Not only have I been tempted to compare it to things, but there is one specific, generally regarded

masterpiece that I've been tempted to compare it to: John Ashbery's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. All the same, I've been wary about this comparison. Those are some mighty big boots to fill, and I do not believe that absolute, unequivocal parity has been established. Nevertheless, all of *Facings* is of a high quality, and a handful of the poems do, in fact, compare (and achieve parity or near-parity) with the poems in Ashbery's book.

Thematically, Stempleman and Ashbery cover much of the same ground: alienation, isolation, displacement (sexual, emotional, spiritual, what have you), and the theme that would bind them both to *Four Quartets* era Eliot (to extend the comparative reach), temporality.

I believe it may be best, when one is being ambitious and daring, to get down to brass tacks as quickly as possible. Here, quoted in full, is a poem from Stempleman's book, called "The Apartment":

*He asked, who lives there,
then brought over his
laundry, covered all the
windows with socks, his old
t-shirts, pillowcases now
separated from their sheets.
The day seemed to go on
forever. The sunlight, and only
the sunlight, almost made its way
through, went on trying to get in
for a very long time.*

We see a move here that Ashbery often makes: the placement of a character that remains unnamed, never "takes on flesh," and is surrounded by images of implosion and desolation. An obvious example from *Self-Portrait* would be "A Man of Words," with its memorable opening lines, "His case inspires interest/ But little sympathy; it is smaller/ Than at first appeared." In the interest of comparison extension, I'd like to opine that the tradition that Ashbery and Stempleman are plugging into here has as much to do with Bertolt Brecht, and his famous alienating techniques, than with any poet in the Modern or Post-Modern canon (though of course Brecht also wrote poetry.)

Brechtian alienation gives us characters that we are not meant to identify with. Given his very catholic taste in art, it is certainly likely that Ashbery would incorporate Brechtian alienation techniques into his poems, and Stempleman has followed suit. It is also worth noting that while sophisticated techniques are employed to create a certain ambience around an amorphous character, we

nonetheless have a linear narrative here. Just as “A Man of Words,” despite some opacity, tells a story (literary grandeur gone to seed), so Stempleman’s poem tells a story too. Temporality extended (the day going on “forever,” sunlight trying to get in “for a very long time”) gives a sense of stasis, while the title of the poem tells us that, unlike Eliot’s “Prufrock,” we are looking at a poor man (“old t-shirts” is another clue) wasting away. Rather than Ashbery’s faded grandeur, Stempleman gives us grandeur that never was, is not, and can never be. It would be a bit of a stretch, but you could see in “sunlight” a metaphor for the creative process. Yet this potential saving grace is thwarted, and the ruination that ends Ashbery’s “Man of Words” is also in evidence here.

It would seem that the ability to tell a story, without resorting to epiphanic commonplaces, confessional melodrama, or pseudo-profound mythologizing, is relatively rare in modern poetry. When a middle-of-the-road stalwart like Billy Collins tells a story, we plug up our ears and stick to a party-line that has become rote: give us inquiry, give us exploration, do not give us hokey generalizations and anecdotal pap.

What is remarkable about Ashbery, and Stempleman after him, is that a story is half-told, a narrative half-presented, in such a way that we are invited to create a story along with the poet. In this specific case, Stempleman’s language leans towards the homely (in contrast to Ashbery’s more baroque tilt): laundry, socks, and sheets. The combination of quotidian items and an incompletely sketched, though obviously alienated character, who moves through the poem in a kind of ellipse, is novel. To bring biography into the equation, Ashbery is an urban poet; New York and New York life constitutes part of his *métier*. Stempleman is rooted in the Mid-Western (based as he is in Iowa City); homeliness substitutes for urbanity, domestic detail for baroque. Yet the mood, the ambience, is strangely similar.

An even greater quotient of palpability, and affectivity, is visible in “The Retired Couple”:

*Stop licking the bread
before calling me into that impossible position again.
The night to remember is impatiently waiting
to be left alone.
It is said there is a greenhouse in this night,
filled with a kind of bamboo
that can tend to itself.
I mean, that’s actually why it’s there.
To live without us, without so much as a visit,*

doing whatever it is the unthinkable do.

On the surface level, this poem brings to light another predilection that binds Eliot to Ashbery, and then Ashbery to Stempleman; aphorism. Ashbery's famous "The night, as usual, knew what it was doing" (not actually from Self-Portrait) is echoed here by Stempleman's "The night to remember is impatiently waiting/ to be left alone." With Stempleman, as with Eliot and Ashbery, aphorism becomes a way of building what is durable from what is memorable. Like an affecting bit of melody, these lines stick in the reader's head without effort, rendering the poem a persistent presence, something ineluctable. The substance of this particular phrase is the same kind of desolation visible in "The Apartment," only this is a two person, rather than a one person scenario. This heightens the emotional tension, ups the ante, as in Ashbery's "Poem in Three Parts."

It is also worth noting that something is in this poem that is not in Ashbery (or most Eliot); the use of conversational diction we see in "I mean, that's actually why it's there." It is important to remember that Stempleman is, in fact, a younger poet writing in 2008 America. The overt and excellent classicism of his work would tend to elide this from his profile, but at odd moments such as this, colloquial America jumps into the picture. This is not a fault, and it is to Stempleman's credit that he is able to mix different worlds of language use so effectively.

Ashbery and Stempleman both deal with issues of emotional entanglement. Yet their approach is oblique enough so that, as with storytelling in these poems, we are encouraged to participate. The first two lines of Stempleman's poem are potentially ambiguous: "Stop licking the bread/ before calling me into that impossible position again." Beyond the brutal sting of a near end-rhyme, what is enunciated here could be a reference to the sexual, the emotional, the spiritual, or any combination or permutation of these. "Impossible position," of course, implies that this retired couple no longer have sex, that physical intimacy has become an impossibility. Yet this is fertile ground for glossing; "licking the bread" could refer to money, or the ravages of age that have forced these two to eat lightly. "Licking the bread" is also repellent, an image of repulsion (leading us back to the Brechtian.) We are not invited to feel along with these two; we may feel like we're looking down the wrong end of a telescope. "Licking" is, or maybe, overtly sexual, so that thematically we have both a kind of avowal and denial in two lines. In short, the way Stempleman opens the poem may give the reader a swift kick in the gut, such as we see when Ashbery writes, in "Farm," "Living with the girl/ Got kicked into the sod of things."

I don't have many gripes with *Facings*. I find all of it admirable, some of it stunning. However, I have taken the initiative here and compared it to a masterpiece. If I'm not arguing for parity, it would seem fair that I should lay out some reasons that

Facings is not a masterpiece on a level with *Self-Portrait*. Very little has been said or written about Ashbery's sensuality. People tend to think of him as an intellectual poet. Yet, *Self-Portrait* is full of sensual details, and it is part of the greatness of the book that it melds the sensual and the intellectual so seamlessly. Stempleman can be a little barren this way, a little short on the sensual details, the "limpid, dense twilight(s)," "smoking dishes," "snake plant(s) and cacti" we see in Ashbery's book.

Shortly, what is abstract in Stempleman is more or less equal to what is abstract in Ashbery; what is not in Stempleman is the palpable half of the equation. There is more breath in Ashbery's line, more expansiveness, than is found in Stempleman's rather crimped line; Stempleman, in his lesser poems, tends to rely on the merely clever. Yet, Ashbery did not come to *Self-Portrait* until he was in his late forties; Stempleman released this book at age 30. As an unbiased observer, there would seem to me to be little reason not to believe that, in time, Jordan Stempleman could write a book that would achieve absolute parity with Ashbery, and set the poetry world on its ear all over again.

by Adam Fieled, originally appeared in Jacket 35 in 2008

Leonard Cohen (Montreal, Quebec, Canada): "What I'm Doing Here"

I do not know if the world has lied
I have lied
I do not know if the world has conspired against love
I have conspired against love
The atmosphere of torture is no comfort
I have tortured
Even without the mushroom cloud
still I would have hated
Listen
I would have done the same things
even if there were no death
I will not be held like a drunkard
under the cold tap of facts
I refuse the universal alibi

Like an empty telephone booth passed at night
and remembered

like mirrors in a movie palace lobby consulted
only on the way out
like a nymphomaniac who binds a thousand
into strange brotherhood
I wait
for each one of you to confess

© Leonard Cohen 1964

Mark Young's *eNumerations...*

Mark Young's *eNumerations*.

Mark Young's *to your scattered bodies go*.

Jeffrey Side on *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*.

from *Something Solid* in Synchronized Chaos.



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P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): from *Map of the Hydrogen World: Fishing Near the Power Plant, Waukegan, Illinois*

the blue-black lake slick with oil, and rainbowed
by gasoline, burps up a carp for a fisherman
under the façade of the old power plant.

at first the fish flops and fights, hanging from the line.
the fisherman heaves the carp up and leaves
it on concrete breakwall. a sign says carp are rough fish.

the carp stops moving his mouth.

his brown scales rust dull red; his false eye mirrors
the glassy calm of the blue-black lake
slick with oil, and rainbowed by gasoline.

© Steve Halle 2008

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa, USA): from *Something Solid: The Nineties: Season in Hell: White Candle*

Once, if we remembered rightly, our life was
a feast at which all hearts opened & all wines
flowed. Now, we found ourselves reduced, as
the unmade bed in room 510 became a symbol
of disorder in our brains, separately & together.
This was our last stand, to & for each other—
to prove, beyond reasonable doubt, what forever
could mean to a boy & girl, partitioned first from

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each other like Romeo & Juliet themselves, now
free from our clans to not accept our respective
conditions. Sleeplessly, we fucked living hell
out of each other, with desperate, animal
intensity, man & wife welded together in white
candle wax, singed into perpetual melt, resolved

into loose fluid. The web around you, Jennifer—
schemes, starvation—if they never knew the woman you
became there & then, in a hotel bed in State College,
amid summer throngs— you & I knowing would have
to be good enough (me taking twenty-five years to see
it), our bodies burning in Elysian fields. O witches, O
misery, O hatred, we entrusted nothing to you at all,
even as guns were lined up for our excoriation. Walled
in on all sides, you left it to me to demonstrate your
wifeliness to the world. I am not merely pleased to
do so— the white candle of our non-immolation
stands in a state of perfect & perfectly lit equilibrium
in the corn-fields behind what used to be your
trailer, the perfect image of our marriage, war—

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***Waxing Hot, a poetics dialogue:* Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Philadelphia, USA), Adam Fieled (Philadelphia, USA)**

Adam Fieled: Hand in hand with the intellectual rigor of your poems is a deep sense of suffering, an awareness of futility and fragility. One might see in your work a “poetics of suffering.” Just as the Buddha said “all life is suffering,” do you feel that, in some sense, all poetry must be “suffering” (or “a suffering”) too?

Rachel Blau DuPlessis: One of the fascinating things about having *Drafts* read is hearing about what they see in the poems. (Hearing what they see.) People’s responses construct a multi-faceted polyhedron for me. It is also fascinating to hear what words people choose to talk about their feelings for this poem and for poetry in general. You have chosen several very freighted words to open this exchange, including using the term of the Buddha. So I have taken a deep breath, and looked at

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your words (“deep”; “suffering”; “futility”; “fragility”; “the Buddha”), and have re-engaged my sense of the poems.

I would say that suffering and fragility (your words) are close to feelings I have about some of the themes of the work, but this is combined with a resilience, resistance, and even a rather inflected joy and awe. “Futility” is your word. I think there is a lot of futility in life, even, in some moods, in all of it, but I couldn’t myself get involved in the 20 year long construction of a poem thinking to communicate sheer futility. The tragic sense of life, the sense of sublimity and rage, is different from futility, after all. Another of the words you use is “must be” what poetry “must be.” Poetry, to be worth something, evokes many, many feelings in readers: structural feelings of pleasure and dastardliness, feelings of being overwhelmed by the force of language, a sense of leaping forward into a world and being contained in relation to the large world by the smaller world made in and by the poem. There is a lot of pleasure in the artfulness of art, even if some of the feelings evoked by a work are overwhelmingly difficult and sad and hard to manage. Hence I don’t think that all poetry must be “suffering.” I can’t wrap myself around that generalization.

AF: Your work shows a clear and ever-present awareness of post-structuralist theory and practice. Yet you also freely incorporate standard devices like rhyme and alliteration. Are you comfortable with the dynamic tension between “hallowed” tradition and new-fangled theory? Do you find it stimulating?

RBD: Another observation about being interviewed by email to join the first observation. Since I don’t know you particularly well, it’s not yet clear what you mean by the terms in which you are invested. If you were to say even a little about what you mean by post-structuralist theory and practice, we could make sure that we are the same page. When I went to college and graduate school (Columbia), there was “no” theory; this means we were almost totally into an unquestioned paradigm formed by the New Criticism. I have by the way never given up my formal sense of the artwork learned under that rubric; it’s just not a pure formalist or purely aesthetic sense that’s ever at stake for me. Only as I exited from my formal education did theory emerge as a set of discussable positions, what I like to call theorizing practices. Or, say this another way: the political rupture of the late 1960s was also an intellectual rupture. This has meant, to me, that I am most engaged with the loop between theory and praxis coming out of feminism and gender thinking.

It’s been, therefore, a thrilling time to become self-educated in what people call theory, which I have always taken as a thinking through. I could thereupon tell you what positions and works have been interesting to me, but they all would fall in the in-between formed by a kind of spiritual yearning and a materialist base. This would first be positions taken up by and in feminist thinking including the theorizing of

Virginia Woolf, plus key works of French feminism (Irigaray, Cixous) and also Spivak and Braidotti, all positions dealing with gender in culture; then positions taken up by echt post-structuralists, most emphatically Barthes, but also Blanchot— these are hard for me to sum up except as being a gloss on spiritual investments and ideological analysis at the same time; and third, the positions of the Frankfurt School, particularly Benjamin and Adorno, plus one very important Marxist pragmatist: Raymond Williams.

The feature of theory that fascinates me, and that I've tried to deal with a bit, is that only some of that evocative list of thinkers ever directly and assiduously treats the poem, poetry, the poetic text. (Obviously, the poet-critics are different in that!) However, I see no contradiction between this set of positions and any poetic tactics I might choose to use! Any rhetorics, formal tactics, choices I make, desires to sound inside language, tripping and torquing tradition are my informed choice. Of course it appears to some that using rhyme links you to tradition, but it could allow you to trump tradition, answer back, and so on. No formal "device" (or choice) has absolute content but situational, historically contingent meanings that get created and recreated inside a specific work.

AF: At one point in *Drafts*, a speaker says, "If I am not who you say I am, you are not who you think you are." This cuts to the core of the political element in *Drafts*— the construction of identity through various "namings", of the self and others. How does the construction of identity (as woman, poet, "speaker", etc.) play into your poetics? Is the poem, or does the poem become, part of the poet's "identity-construct"?

RBD: I sincerely think and hope that speaker was Ralph Ellison. It's one of the citations in *Drafts* unchecked (or one of the unchecked citations). I cited it for the magnificent dialectics. (It's in "Draft 48: Being Astonished" my poem concerning a whole generation of female experimental poets and all the different subject positions they might be imagined to have and to take up.) My identity? There are a lot of parameters to identity (class, race, gender, religious culture, job category, national location, social usefulness). I try to forget them all when I write. That doesn't mean I am not engaging them, or engaging with them. I just try to work into them and beyond them at the same time. I know this is a paradox. That's the paradox of writing. Of course the poem, a task and struggle as large as *Drafts*, becomes part of who I am now.

AF: Sense of place in *Drafts* seems to me multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, "numerous." Is the voyage "inside times and inside pronouns" one with destination other than "a speaking" or "a writing"? Can you carry elements of this voyage into "dailiness" or is there an evanescence to it?

RBD: If I understand the question, you are asking does the poem—with its ethics and sense of being— affect my daily life. The answer is— sometimes. I think the poem comes from everything I am, and has also changed what I am.

AF: You devote a substantial amount of space in *Drafts* to a dialectical exploration of Adorno's famed quote that (to paraphrase) to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. Do you believe that statements of this sort, i.e. deliberately provocative statements, are a healthy part of cultural conversation, or merely a nuisance, or can they be both?

RBD: Your question refers to a poem called "Draft 52: Midrash" in the most recent book of *Drafts*, *Drafts 39-57, Pledge, with Draft, unnumbered, Précis* (Salt Publishing, 2004). The poems in this book are all dedicated to specific people, and constitute a personal pledge of engagement with the issues of historical tragedy and spiritual questioning that the poems as a whole set forth. However, "Draft 52: Midrash" is deliberately un-dedicated. This is a commentary on the Holocaust and on the genocidal, killing fields, and mass murder tasks that nazi-fascism has taken up, no matter where it is active.

One of the notable poems in that book, "Draft 52: Midrash," makes an endless, unresolved gloss on Adorno's sententia, After Auschwitz to write a poem is barbaric, taking his statement as an important ethical talisman. (His statement comes in an essay called "Cultural Criticism and Society"; it appeared in *Prisms*.) I truly thought his comment was beyond what would normally be seen as provocative in a cultural conversation (to use your words) and came from an emotional and political space far, far beyond anything that could be called nuisance. There are always some people who mouth off about poetry and what poetry should or should not do, and articulate orders for poets but Adorno is far beyond being one of those people. His statement comes from the most wrenching revulsion, grief and human anguish. Therefore, because it was so absolutist, I respected it as such. However, because it was so absolutist (plus annihilating, as morally wrong or uncivilized, my desire to write poetry), I felt it had to be discussed. Not answered, discussed.

It is very important to me that this poem is called "midrash". This word evokes a textual strategy from Hebrew interpretive practices. Midrash originally meant a continuous and generations-long commentary on sacred texts by those— males, in Orthodox tradition— invested with appropriate spiritual authority and learning. In writing this particular midrash on Adorno, I am taking a secular text, in the post-Holocaust context, examining it as a woman untrained in any philosophical tradition of argument, but someone who is invested in the notion of thinking in poetry. The gesture is therefore filled with critique.

Actually, *Drafts* as a whole project alludes to— but secularizes— this genre of serious commentary, spiritual investment, and continuous gloss. By the title *Drafts*, I am signaling that these poems are open to transformation, part of ongoing processes of construction, self-commentary, and reconstruction. This is similar to the collective processes of midrash. And, while some in individual *Drafts* can be very funny and witty, the whole project has thematic and emotional investments centering on loss, struggle, and hope, on the unsayable and “anguage,” the language of anguish.

conducted by e-mail, late 2005-early 2006

Chris McCabe (London, UK): "Existential Clubbing"

Five fingered bars strobe white prisms from brick
Inversion of God's Ministry. Bouncers are ministers,
frisk you in a soul-search. Find an in-pocket novel,
original *Penguin Classic*. Consider refusing you entry,
presumes you're no trouble. Drunken bookish one.
You put your soul in the cloakroom, the ticket says 72.
There are only seven other people you can see.
They are so young your face reflects in their eyelids.
The only offer at the bar is being served.
The lager scrapes the outside of the barrel.
The dancefloor is a pelt of purple, un-refuseable.
It is so long since you last danced the baton of the rhythm
remains two seconds ahead of you. Someone faceless
suggests you are not a student; you think quick, say you have
more letters after your name than in it. The dancefloor has
doubled in size. The DJ tells you he has lent all of his albums
to a friend. You have no friends; you think he blames you
for the dancefloor being empty. Your spit is mote-dust.
The pulse in your temples is the after-audio of a chant
of a ritual. You start to dream in pink wafers. You take
your coat, it refuses to talk back. Outside is cold. The
club is called *Secrets*. You have never heard of the place.

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Miscellaneous E Hits

The Flourish and the Fall by Keith Nunes on *AOP*.

Two (relatively) new sites: *Scud* and *Ink Pantry*.

Funtime Press begins the process of spreading its wings, taking to the air.

From *Something Solid*: a 2024 palimpsest moves Tobi aside for Abby.

Remembering Lyn Hejinian.

There's what's in the Cabinet, then what the Cabinet's in.

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, USA): from *PICC (A Poet in Center City)* #39

“Ingres and David,” Tobi shouted in my ear, as I held onto her waist and we grinded on the dancefloor, upstairs at the Khyber. “Still them, huh?” “Of course. I still don’t care what they say at PAFA, and I don’t care what Trish says either.” Tiny Tob—another brain complicated enough, like John’s, to make your head spin, when up close and personal finally became a reality. She’d moved, as a painter, into a charmed space in which her kaleidoscope eyes fashioned, from street-life among the heavy dykes in Center City, a thematic compromise with the stern formality of the French Neo-Classicists. She managed to work me in as a little fun, on the side. Not that, standing on stage with The Bats, who were playing cat and mouse with the East Coast media at the time, her cherubic face didn’t lead most Philadelphians to think she was just another rock girl. John loved her, too. The neighborhood where Tob had a flat and The Bats had a co-op house in the environs, South Street past Broad, into the mid-to-high Teens (Tob was on 16th), had become a dynasty situation for them. Not a neighborhood with a specific name, adjunct to center-of-the-center, but when lines formed to see them at Tritone, right in the heart of it, John and I knew our place as art geeks in comparison. Tob was a cheater! Once in a while, we got called in by The Bats heavy brass to do roadie duty. “By the way,” I thought fair to mention to her, “I couldn’t find those maracas at 8th Street Music at all. I don’t think they have them.” Tobi made a *moue* but also giggled, “Don’t ask me, ask Liz.” The song and the grind were about to end, but I knew Tobi would eventually be dispatched up to Logan Square for a few nights, and she was. John and I got paid back for our consummate skill lugging gear around with what amounted to, each time, about a joint worth of dope each. Fair. With us, Liz was happy to fire up the Bukka White and subject us to a rigmarole, two heavy dykes and two pretty bis, that had to do with demonstrating the right kind of devotion, so that The Bats at the Highwire Gallery

could feel comfortable that they were not demeaning themselves there. It was useless at the house to talk to anyone but Liz. She'd look at you and make her appraisal for the evening: "Oh, it's you guys. Alright, you both wait here and I'll come back and show you where the gear is." Liz, with the red, lank mop, fulfilled her quotient of the redhead's notorious bloody-mindedness: "These two amps, set by the door for now. Don't touch the instruments 'til they're packed the right way. The keyboard, Tob is going to do for herself tonight." Might I say, with some embarrassment, that the portion of the dope we then received went right into our lungs. So that, gear lugged to a station wagon which only had to drive a yet-crucial few blocks, we all wound up at Tritone, to watch Tob and Liz go into Mick-and-Keith mode and leave John and I in the dust again. All in good fun. But the last thing I asked Tob on the Khyber upstairs dancefloor was to the point: "Are you gonna try to show this time?" Tob's eyes rolled up to the not particularly lofty ceiling, as the song began to fade and I relaxed my grasp on her waist. She collected herself, and said "Yeah. But I have to wait for all the other stuff to settle down. And no one's gonna rush me, either." I told John what she said, and he laughed all over again. This time, he wouldn't tell me why. The inscrutable bisexual brain: it is what it is.

Adam Fieled © 2023

Andrew Duncan (Nottingham, UK): "The Metallic Autumn"

Rain silvers the slate roofs, smoke blows through the rain.
The hawthorn hedges are a red haze.
The hills above the town are blurred by mist.
Beauty is stripped away.
Light is pierced with nostalgia, slow and lax.
Decadent season.
Water forms as a haze between light and rain.
Flowers and leaves decaying in the streams
mix earth and water in slow dispersal.
Blur steals over visible forms,
smoke and moulder stir in the ash of light.
The pools are sorrowful, the sips of flowers split.
I find a single apple whole after all these weeks,
skin whole and pulp firm as sapwood.

In a slush of softness and excrescence,
late berries languish on the tendrils,

lush to dissolution, spoilt with juice,
blackier than nature with a white tinge like regret.
In the shadow of the sunny fronds,
where dew never dries, they drink and rot.
Rain on the leaf, dew on the bine. Mites
finger the abacus of their flesh.
Rain silvers the roof-slates, smoke blows through the rain.

Season of memory and regret.
Barrels coop up the giddy hearts for recollection.
The animals grow lazier and furrier:
search out shelter and apathy!
The heady noon is gone, the soft inner of the blossoms
and their offer. The rarer veins are frozen in their course.
We waited for the glance of the sun.
The osier of bare birch twigs seems like smoke
against the red glow of the Apple going down.

Rain silvers the roof-slates, smoke blows through the rain.
A swirl of leaves like heavy fire
pours through the tamping of a world on the wane.
The darkened sky withholds the weary forms.
Crepuscle, dissolution of concepts;
season of case-hardening ash,
season of ferment and thorough steeping.
Fruits infringe their brinks and stream their brims
overlapping the thick pulp of fallen things.

The principle of ice shall come to judgment
on the lusts of Nature, searching out the flaw.
Bare branches detach pure metre from an obese rhetoric.
Blue glare shall stake out the torpid mist,
pure-axile crystals shall affirm the morass.

© Andrew Duncan 2001

Valeria Melchiorretto (London, UK): "Grandmother's Cataracts"

for Oxfam

Her eyes stop her from seeing the world for what it had always been
long before the cataracts became an issue. It is hard to say what exactly

she is looking forward to. So many fanciful visions rest at the base
of her eye sockets and words go rancid in the abyss of her throat.

If she had saved the left over umbilical cord of her many children, she
could now weave herself a shawl for cold winter nights when she talks

to her dead husband who as usual doesn't reply. Nothing must be wasted
or else everything is for nothing. No babies thrown out with the bath water

no matter how cheap life must be. She thought of her children as the future,
now she hardly sees them. The cataracts are not to blame but her children's

future is abroad. Every so often the kind neighbors call her over to answer
short long-distance calls. The phone wire has replaced the umbilical cord.

Those wide cheekbones have faced the indispensable as it lurked daily.
Solid corners of her face on which she hangs a sad smile to dry her tears.

Now that the house is empty she wonders how long the future will take
as time is nothing but short spells of rain, long spells of rain and restlessness.

(Orig. published in Poets for a Better Future, ed. Todd Swift, Oxfam, 2004)

John Siddique (Wigan, UK): "Tree of the World"

On nights when the sounds of the children
we should have had wake me. I sit in the yellow
of the bulb, and place my hands upon the horizon,
spin on the axis mundi which connects us,
even though at times we have no desire
to be connected. The stones on the moor,

touched by so many over the centuries,

so much so they have memories, will tell the stories
of all our confessions. If one will just stand,
and lay one's hands and listen at the centre.

The carvings of spirals and swastikas,
concentric rings and bloodlines, added to
over millennia, will fade in eternities face.
Each year a wipe of a cloth over rough stone,
soon they'll be polished and faceless,
soon they will be sand on the wind.

I will wait for you there, where the symbols
lose their meanings, where our attempts
at holding on are less than nothings, but still the axis,
nameless and unspeakable, is true, never out of sight.

© John Siddique 2005

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Blog Information Profile for afieled



P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Mary Walker Graham (Boston, USA): "Double"

Here is a box of fish marked tragedy.

Is it different from the dream

in which your alter ego kills the girl?

You are the same, and everyone knows it,

whether tracing the delicate lip of the oyster shell,

or sharpening your blade in the train car.

The marvelous glint is the same.

Though you think you sleep, you wake

and walk into the hospital, fingering

each instrument, opening each case with care.

The scales fall away with a scraping motion.

You are the surgeon and you are the girl.

Whether you lie like feathers on the pavement,

or coolly pocket your equipment, and walk away...

You are the same; and you are the same.

You only sleep to enter the luminous cave.

originally published in Ocho #11, guest edited by Adam Fieled

© Mary Walker Graham 2007

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- Adam Fieled

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Mark Young chapbook, *Melancholy...*

Mark Young chapbook, *Melancholy*, out from SurVision Books.

Jeffrey Side: Remembering Marjorie Perloff.

Andrew Lundwall's full-length, *Gardening at Night*.

Steve Halle's suite, second full-length, *Blackbirds*.

Two new and interesting portal-ways for *Equations*: 1 and 2.

Tangentially, introducing *The Webbers*.

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Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, USA): from *Something Solid: Miscellaneous Sonnets: State of Grace*

for Mary Walker Graham

Grape soda bottle on the desk; wind, out of
Eleusis, shut the door. Our clothes came
off; your limbs spun like spokes. I peered
outside; it was light. New Hampshire summer
sun, four a.m. Poets to face at breakfast.
Workshops to sit through, lectures, but I
knew I'd never have you the right way
again, or any way. We'd done the thing
once we'd been meaning to do, so as I
stepped from the window, gazed at you
dozing, naked, I thought to myself, maybe
that's what amounts to a state of grace—
you're given something once, fully, so
that you may be satiated with it, & that's it—

© Adam Fieled 2022

Vlad(Ien) Pogorelov (Rocklin, California, USA): "No. 9"

"I've been around the places"

So my friend says

While we are drinking wine and smoking dope
We've had a lot of hope
But we've lost it
Somewhere on the way
--Get away!
--Get away!
--Get away!
My friend Confusion
No premature conclusions
No disappointment with life
It's only a lie
That you can get your soul drunk
Or high
She always stays sober
But she can get lost on the way
And it's true

--My friend! How many poems have you read?
--None.
--My friend! How many poems have you done?
--None.
--My friend! How many lives have you lived?
--One.

Jimmy Page,
Johnny Cash,
Charles Bukowsky,
-ovsky, -osky,
And Karl Marx
All white but one
You know who?
Think!

My friend has moved from his chair
He is on the floor
Lying there, just lying there
Being mute,
Being deaf,
Asleep

Still, music is playing
Now, its "Fleetwood Mac"
And I'm back to the kitchen
Talking to another friend of mine.
The pigeon
The diseased bird
Who will die very soon
Maybe at night
Maybe tomorrow noon
Don't know exactly when
Soon!

Am I multilingual?
Am I?
I can speak to the birds,
To the prostitutes,
Or even the cockroaches,
Though they never reply,
But the general rule
Always being applied:
--Baby! Get high!
--Mommy! Get high!
--Pigeons! Get high!
--Humans! Get high!
Maybe everything will be
more soft and more friendly
Maybe it will be

© Vlad(len) Pogorelov 1997

Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): from *Blackbirds*

a strained female face,
beads of sweat
her concentration camp

every word spoken
aching knee on kneeler
in pillory of all

denominations are granular, if
you'll remember

nipple peak, pique
peek sheet white, rubied

perk up shrift, elbow discomfort,
warming lubricant or mopping
up the thick aftermath

stains and burns

barely out of teens
it's discovered.

sweat wall, cross-hatched
wicker with lipstick, grief
in darkness, a voice sounds
like half a wrinkled face

mid-mass, a bird enters
church, confused feathers
aflutter, it lingers among
rafters, while i ponder
over kneelers, among dissonant
voices of god and Other

half-memorare, naughty in uniform,
kim unfurls, reeling on dope
and nicotined, buzzing late rebuzz
rebound each mispronunciation
an obligation, a misguided
angel gilds a season with weather
severs eardrums in silence
song a frequency above, vibratto

weeping into orgasms
over risqué pages

still half-hard, a thighbite

this passion a rush
of adrenaline over impropriety

finger trace nipples in concentric
circles leaving burn
marks wanting grafts

hum, hiss, strum, click, the vic.'s
needle dum-dee-dums
beyond reach, like bedded
sins of lazy passions
Cistercian, cervical, and blossoms.

© Steve Halle 2007

Andrew Lundwall (Rockford, Illinois, USA): from *Gardening at Night: All Eyes*

for Melissa

shaken with all of this we have eyes
to see ahead of us no one comes to set up
always she opened the mirror very quietly
like fate the flowers continue on throughout the day

always always remember pure unsupervised stares
our breaths that other lovers view on a screen unfurl
behold the many marvels of darkness
in front of in the face of very near

© Andrew Lundwall 2008

Susan Wallack (Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, USA): "Bridge"

I know your arms & legs are cold.
In November the river shifts

slowly, silver ghost of its body
barely stirred, ice already forming.

And today, midday, I heard you moan.
Grinding bones of a steel-strapped frame.

As if you had moved, or tried to.
As if the surging light was painful.

originally published by the Toledo Review



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Blog Information Profile for afield



P.F.S. POST

PHILADELPHIA FRABJOUS

Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa, USA): *Chimes: New Visions: Ice Skating Rink*

Editor:

- Adam Fieled

The weekend nights we went ice skating at the Old York Road Ice Skating Rink, semi-adjacent to Elkins Park Square, also on Old York Road, weren't much for Ted and I: just something to do. Neither of us could ice skate that much. But there was a DJ playing good music over the PA, and taking requests, and a lot of Cheltenham kids hung out at the rink on weekends, so it was a chance to see and be seen. One uneventful ice skating night, I tumbled onto my ass as usual, and rose to see a girl, sitting in a clump of kids, on the bleachers, staring fixedly at me. My next pass, I got in a good look at her, and saw the spell was holding: she was still staring. She was a dirty blonde, thick-set build, with very full lips, a wide mouth, and wearing a dark green winter hat. I made up my mind: my next pass, I was going to stare as fixedly at her as she was at me. Ted was floating in the environs somewhere, and didn't know what was going on. So, here I came, looking at the girl in the green winter hat I'd never seen before, who seemed to want a piece of my action. I was close enough to make my presence known to her; we locked eyes; and what I saw in the delicate blue eyes was a sense of being startled, shocked into awareness somehow. Only, there was something so raw, so frank in them that I had to look away. My next, and final pass for the time being, the same thing happened. My eyes were startled, in an animal way, by how startled, how riveted her own eyes were, and I found myself unable to prolong contact. As Ted and I hung in the changing room, which had picnic tables and benches in it and doubled as a hang out space, I relayed to Ted, not without pride, what had happened. Ted was a reasonable, rather than a jealous type, but shy. So, the mysterious dirty blonde sat with her friends still, unmolested by us. Edward, our close acquaintance, a year older than us but kind, and conversant with almost everyone at the rink, was someone I could consult, so I did. I pointed her out, and he said, "Oh, that's Nicole. Do you know her?" "No, I was just curious. Thanks, Eddie." He chuckled, and left us alone, close acquaintanceship not guaranteeing me any more than that. I had wild hopes that Nicole would burst

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dramatically into the hang-out room with her friends, and perhaps propose marriage to me. When the gaggle of kids including Nicole, who had all been bleacher-hounding, left, they walked past us, down the steps and out. Nicole did not venture a final glance. For several months after that, I hoped Ted and I would see Nicole at the rink, but we did not. It was a lesson in the live-wire nature of desire, as it lives between people— how flames both begin to burn and are extinguished, out of nowhere, at the behest of forces no one really understands. Ted, that night, did his rounds, building a solid structure which would enable him to become a popular kid at CHS. I lit somebody on fire, but in such a way that all that could come from it was subsumed beneath implacable surfaces. Somewhere, I felt instinctively, was the key to the mystery I was looking for. Even if finding that key meant riding confusing, misleading, and/or agonizing waves.

.....

What the matrix structure of the Old York Road Ice Skating Rink held for us kiddies—as has been said, a place to see and be seen. Ted and I were sad to watch on the ice. But quirks emerged during our time there— the appearance of strange kids, and strange situations, from other places. Like Nicole. It wasn't long after Nicole that a new, mini-epoch began at the rink, based on the manifestation of another figurehead, (they said) from Abington. Josie was a pretty, lank-haired blonde with a semi-mottled complexion. Like Nicole, she liked to sit on the bleachers with her Abington buddies. Word reached us that, unlike Nicole, Josie was loose. If you could get her down the stairs, into the parking lot, over past the big misshapen rock which was rather uselessly placed between the rink and the back of Elkins Park Square, into the no-man's-land area where older kids liked to hang, anything might happen. I wanted a shot at Josie, too. As was de rigueur, Edward was our go-between. I had faith that he could power-broker anything. I called to him, on a night in March getting slightly too warm to still be at the rink, "Eddie, can I talk to you for a minute?" "What's up, Foley?" "Is this thing about that Josie girl from Abington really true?" "I don't know. I don't know her that well." "You know what people are saying." "Sure I do, but there's nothing too definite about what I've been told." I was losing him. I had already semi-crossed a line Edward had set in place about what you (whoever you were, and however he ranked you) were allowed to extort, as precious data, from him. I had to act fast. "I want to meet Josie, Eddie. Can you help me?" "C'mon, Foley. That stuff doesn't come cheap. Remember, I don't know you too well, either." Next gambit: "Alright, listen, Eddie. Didn't you say earlier that you have a paper to write for Langhorne?" He nodded. "I'll write it for you. If you'll introduce me to Josie, I'll write your Langhorne paper. You know I can." "Really,

Foley?” “That’s right, Eddie.” “Alright, give me half an hour. I’ll see what I can do.” The half hour wait was an itchy one. Ted was on an unstoppable roll. He’d lined up an impressive array of conquests. Mostly guys, mostly about how he was going to be situated. I was neglecting to do that task, because it just wasn’t in me to do it. Whatever was going to happen at CHS, I was ready to wing it. After ending the half hour with ten minutes of stumble-across-the-ice, I walked into the changing room to find Edward sitting there with Josie. “Josie, this is Adam Foley. Foley, call me tomorrow night, I’ll give you the assignment.” “You got it, Eddie.” I got terrible stomach butterflies; I thought I might vomit. I thought meeting Josie would be an ebullient, light-on-it’s-feet kind of production. Josie’s vibe up close was very heavy. I mumbled a few random pleasantries. Josie said, “Are you OK? You seem a little tense.” I was extremely tense. “No, just recovering from falling on my ass out there.” “Do you want to go for a walk?” “OK.” Down the stairs we went, out into the lot. “Here’s what I’m going to help you with, Adam Foley. Here’s what you need. You think you know who girls are— you think you know what girls want. This is not about us being friends or not friends. You sought me out, here I am, but I’m going to give you my diagnosis.” We were behind the big stupid rock— none of the older kids was around. “Here— you get to kiss me one time, no tongue.” As was incredible to me, I found myself momentarily lip-locked with Josie. A group of older kids, twenty yards away, behind Elkins Park Square, were moving towards us. The thing had to end very fast. The kiss was over. “Now, here’s who you are. You’re the guy who always sticks out like a sore thumb wherever you go. You’re the one who wants to do everything your way. You think you’re special. What I have to tell you is this— you are special, Adam, but in this world not everyone likes that. Your friend goes out of his way to make himself not special. You need to learn from us— you can’t always be exactly who you want. Eddie said, you’re a year younger than us. When you get to where we are, you better understand that the more you stick out, the more you’re a target. So, here’s how you pay me back.” We went over to Hillary’s in the Square; I bought her an ice cream cone. She ate it quickly, standing in the Square. Then, she took my hand, led me back to the rink. Even before the top of the stairs, she disappeared into a group of Abington kids. Had I learned my lesson? Sort of. I associated being special with the magic of words and music. I wasn’t a target yet, except maybe with Dad. Who knew? Now, I had an extra paper to write. I would try, for Eddie and Langhorne, to make it a special one.

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Susan Wallack (Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, USA): "Medea's Other Child"

A dozen years in seasons of days
sweeping light across the girl-child's

eyes unaccustomed to the night.
A kind of wisdom. (I dream of her

in the dark, my darkness, a stage.)
Slight, stooped, dusty, bare feet worrying

the roots of tumbleweeds and fruited bramble
growing in spurts, untended. Father

a conquering hero, liar and cheat,
gone for good. Mother spending time

waiting on men, waiting on tables
in a greasy cafe, the sorceress still,

dyed hair piled high as a crown upon
a furrowed brow. Passion spent in a rush

like the nouveau riche spend: all fleece and rubies.
In the end there's nothing for the kid

but spidery afternoons alone
imagining desire, throbbing

and hot as a black widow's bite,
consuming her flesh against her will.

originally published in Mississippi Valley Review, Spring 1994

Steve Halle (Palatine, Illinois, USA): from *blackbirds*

it smells the same
and is
each time

blind

signs, but
Bernard can't see
doesn't even want
to see, any—

more than enough
suffering, glimpsed
in flashes of scent,
or hand on face not his own

around here, something radiates

near the incinerator, an underground
man, his back hunched
disfigurement he could
neither afford to
fix or let fester

words on a transistor
or bracketed tee-vee:
simple information:

this pill, now
that pill, when...

he chews the arm
of left-behind
eyeglasses, nervous
like a phrase out of Nietzsche,
her body lingers here, there
above or down a corridor, in
a ward far off,
a fake-perked nurse untying
gowns and tearing out
sutures and un—

telling her
my sister and i ride

elevators up,
down, declare
secret places
best for assurance

here everything's going / got to be ok.

© Steve Halle 2008

Otoliths in print, etc.

Otoliths, retired from publishing new issues, is nonetheless still fluently in print.

More from Mary Walker Graham: 1 and 2.

Mike Land (Philadelphia, USA): "Fall Hunter"

Tom Brady had two hours left to wait at the Dark Brew Coffee House before the girl he'd arranged a date with would arrive. His empty mug woke him to the uneasiness in his muscles. He begged himself to bring it to the counter for another refill to help him wait. Instead, he continued looking down, aware of that unavoidable decision he would make prior to three o'clock.

In the face of his weakness, he formed his usual scowl that mixed contempt with distrust. Put off by the surroundings he'd found himself in nearly every day, he couldn't understand why he continued coming back. Why after so much time, he maintained the semi-daily ritual of entering through glass doors, sitting unnoticed by the register, and rereading magazines nobody liked to see him carry. They portrayed the skill of a hunt, and the glory of a woodsman. Part of him wished it wouldn't occupy every aspect of his interest, but he thought the need too inlaid to change. Photos or articles of dead and stuffed animals served to remind him of his weighty grasp of living. Such a grasp secured the truth he came to know in brutality.

Would-be peers despised his presence, mistook him as some worshipper of savage acts, a carrier of heartless ego. But it was his control. That control was the foundation for what he thought was steady protection. A few had tried to crumble those walls, intrigued by the distance, testing his defense. They brought with them a sense of pity Brady could not stand. He had no problem in making that clear to

them, and quickly they'd give up. With each abandonment, his fortress grew more remote. It wouldn't be long before he accepted his emotions as unchangeable, and his holiest belief, the unavoidability of destruction.

He had been going this direction for years, and truly, he thought himself too weak to care. Within him there was a pride to his resignation. Viewed as a flawless safety in identifying his weakness, he managed to defeat everyone, first of all himself. He was desperate for something more, of that much he was certain, but unwilling to sacrifice the security of his loneliness, he was doomed to remain inside the boundaries of a white-walled prison. He was realizing the sublime plan for Tom Brady. And he shed tears at the thought of the boy who became a man overnight, and the man who stood forever still while the world around him tore itself apart.

He was in the midst of this conclusion when she interrupted him. "How can you support such cruelty?" Annabel Black asked of Brady's fascination with a stuffed and mounted four-point Buck he'd been poring over in the pages of "Hunter's Quarterly." Both saddened and entranced by the animal's reduced glory at once, he was unable to move his focus from the polish of the page. "I don't."

"Then why do you have the magazine?" She asked; not to be phased by his listless response. "If you don't support it, why do you have the magazine?" Riled, but wholly unafraid, Annabel looked down at the six-foot frame of Brady's filled out body, shoulders curling in on themselves, hands hidden beneath the table. He stared into the gloss of the magazine's image, silently begging for its lifelessness to save him from his own surrender. He looked up at her, rejoining the pain he'd worked so hard to escape.

"I don't support it," he said. "But sometimes it makes sense. When nothing else seems right, it reminds me why it doesn't. And that's all I'm looking for." He saw the hope evident in her approach being brought to the surface. He saw her almond-colored eyes growing larger because of his sincerity.

"Well, I'm glad," she said with a smile. "I kind of expected something as sad from you."

Brady nodded at his own notoriety. She embraced a moment of hesitation. An indication of the deeper desire to acquaint with the man she'd seen so sadly self-contained, he could only have loathed companionship. But in that moment of hesitation, that incalculable gap between what's expected and what's desired, Brady's insides begged him to lower the fence he'd so ably constructed for this very reason.

Annabel subtly nodded, preparing to return to her table, once again to rejoin Dylan Thomas in a lonely embrace.

“Wait,” he said. “You should hear how I feel about domesticated animals... I mean that’s really depressing.”

“I’m a dog person,” she said.

“They’re so sad,” replied Brady. “It’s in their eyes. Like the only thing they’re really aware of is that they’re going to die.” He paused. “But I don’t really know, I only ever had an Iguana.” Annabel had a seat in the chair across from Brady, now more animated than she’d ever seen him; more animated than he himself could remember.

“An iguana, Really?” she said.

“No. Not really,” said Brady with a playful smile. Annabel ha-ha’d quietly and closed the magazine that lay open between them. Brady brought his hands out from underneath the table and let them rest close to hers.

They discussed matters Brady hadn’t given thought to since graduating from college. Political beliefs, philosophy, science theory, so many things he turned his back on when each was unable to answer the questions he’d felt plaguing him since he understood what the word plagued meant. When they offered him no relevant explanations as to why he had such difficulty with change, he denied their merit, and was left in the wake of his own recalcitrance. This was three years before he’d met Annabel, and in a matter of hours, she convinced him of the possibilities changing his life could afford.

Throughout the night, their knees would touch beneath the table, and it was more contact than he had known in some time. Brady’s look wouldn’t stray from her eyes, and she held his depth for as long as he desired. He couldn’t resist an almost constant, garish grin that Annabel returned with equal earnest. Suddenly, he began to warm up to the fact that maybe the life he’d devoted to remoteness wasn’t worth its numbing reward.

When Dark Brew closed that night, he didn’t want to let her go. He was shocked by his reaction, astounded at the level of connection he wouldn’t allow himself to deny. As they parted, he pleaded with himself to set up another chance to connect. There was so much more about her he wanted to know. And for once, he wasn’t terrified of letting her know about him. He wanted to tell her about himself, about the fear he never felt strong enough to contend with. It was what he hid from the world, out of the sheer terror of making it worse on him.

Before he could form the words, she was talking about Mark. Annabel told Brady that she'd met him a few months before; and that while she wasn't sure about what they wanted from each other, she was certain he and Brady would get along as friends. "Yeah, famously, I'm sure," he said with a sting that wasn't intentional. "I just thought you should know, before you--" she stopped. "And I don't even know. It's just... we know each other." He fought back the urge to abandon her. He hung on to that faint chance they had of truly finding each other like it was his last shot at bravery. It was enough to keep Brady from giving up, at least for a little while. He would say it was fine, and ask her for another night. All the while he kept in mind the haunting connotations of what exactly 'we know each other' means.

He sat at Dark Brew staring at an empty mug, waiting for a girl he thought could tear him away from his stillness. Deep inside him he knew it could not be the case. He recalled the memory of his father, and knew Annabel could never understand. No one could. To even make an attempt would only remind him of the pain he had the power to dull if only he continues to reject the world around him. He stared into the empty mug, pushed it across the table, and walked out of the shop. If she saw him again at the coffee house he would make sure to be short, and snide; he had a gift for showing people the door, and would fake pleasure in telling her he was no longer interested.

As he left Dark Brew he knew exactly what to do. He would walk the few blocks to Barnes & Noble to buy the latest issues of his hunting magazines, the objects that washed away the risk Brady saw in uncertainty. He hated their reaffirmation of his debilitating solitude, but it was all that he could count on. Rejection of everything was what granted him his safety, and for Brady, that safety counted most.

He pushed in the giant glass door that marked the bookstore's entrance. At the magazine rack labeled "outdoors" he gazed across the unfeeling eyes of hunters as they stood around their prizes. How he hated them. How much they reminded him of his own misery, and how no matter what he thought, nothing inside him could change for the better. He saw it only a moment after looking. Spread across the cover of "Fall Hunter", there was the weathered figure of a man in a room filled with mounted animals, his eyes grown weary after a life spent devoted to death. His sullen face looked out from the glossy cover, communicating a truly profound guilt. Not for all the life he had taken, but for his own that was wasted. He stood in front of his rewards, and presented only a gap where pride should have lived. The man had beaten everyone, and bitterness was his prize. Distance from humanity was what gave this hunter such a showroom, but the showroom was what sliced him down the middle. He looked two parts now, one in control of his own decisions, and the other, their servant. His soul was stuck between them, attached to neither, a part of nothing. The choice the man had made was to remain there, unwilling to change

what he became. And now, the man's detachment seemed all that there was to protect him from the sadness of his life. Inside his stern and pitiless look, Brady saw distrust for the whole human race. Brady saw himself.

A genuine fear rushed through him, for in that moment he might have forever stayed the same. He saw his life before him, and what he'd gained and lost. He at once saw the memory of his father, Ryan Brady. It was a memory he had tried so long to bury, but now it struck him in a way impossible to ignore. Brady saw his father, laying dead on the soft dirt of a forest. It was their first hunting trip together, and Brady knew, it must have been his fault. It tore him to pieces each time he remembered, ashamed that it happened, ashamed of his reaction, ashamed of himself. But something inside him had changed. His myopic view of the past was diminishing. He began to see the world in front of him, and the static resolution of every situation's predictable security. It wasn't possible. Not for him; not for Thomas Brady. He'd allowed his soul to shrink to the point of invisibility, to where he was nothing more than a shell, hardened by cynicism and removed from the world he had once adored. He was more than that. He was always more than that.

Dropping the magazine to the ground, he turned on his heels and ran back to his meeting with Annabel. As he ran, he felt a freedom from the crushing weight his self had strangled him with for so long. He was running from a life that would not catch up with him. At his back there was the past, and he'd spent long enough in its deadening grip; in front of him there was potential, danger, truth. He felt in his muscles a joy he could not remember, his heart pumping through him the beauty of epiphany. All at once he was made aware of how wrong he was, why he'd done it, and how it could be changed. He was running to Annabel. He yanked open the door of the coffee shop and saw her waiting. He crossed the length of the floor to where she sat and plopped down in the chair opposite, not giving a thought to his winded and sweaty presence.

"Jesus," she said. "Are you okay? I thought you stood me up." "Annabel, listen to me." He paused only a moment to catch his breath. In her arched eyebrows he saw a trust he at once admired. "I--" He started. "I-- I lied when I told you my father was a lawyer. He's not. He died. He dropped dead of a heart attack on our first hunting trip together. It just gave out, he gave out. I don't tell people that. Ever. But I told you because I want you to know. Because I can see you helping to save me from myself. I want to know you, Annabel. I want to know you."

She winced at the revelation. "Brady, I'm sorry. I... Last night I told Mark about you. It was what he needed to get serious about us." Brady felt what was distinctly similar to a punch in the stomach, but nothing could dull his surge of emotion. "Jesus, I'm really sorry, Brady. I mean, it doesn't mean we can't still be friends."

Brady looked across the table with eyes that asked nothing more than understanding. He could for once, begin to understand himself. He saw the past he was prepared to move on from and expected to see the future as securely, but couldn't. What lay ahead was unclear, it was unknown. And that's what came to change him. The future's unpredictability was what would inspire him, not Annabel, not a picture on a magazine, but the promise of a future he would admit was beyond his control.

He looked up at Annabel. Her expression was that of awaiting some explosive rebuff that would have ended her time at the Dark Brew coffee house. "No, it doesn't," he said with a smile. "I realized what there's no getting around." She looked at him with those eyes, warm enough to melt a hunter.

"I want to know you."

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Adam Fieled (editor, Plymouth Meeting, Pa, USA): from PICC (*A Poet in Center City*) #50

"Tell me a story..." is what Debbie Blantz chose, quizzically, to open with, after I handed her the cell phone. Larsen Spurn, ensconced in South Philly, was on the other end. It was the middle of the night; maybe 2 am; and a bunch of us were lying, stoned, in an open field directly behind the Contoocook in Henniker. I worked, as always when stoned, on intuition and hunches, and I had a hunch that Larsen would answer his phone. So, Deb decided, still wet from rope-swinging into the river in her bra and panties, and perhaps on a whim, to ditch her customary Brahmin façade and slug Philly in the guts. It was a gutsy time to be there. The confluence of circumstances which brought the poets to Henniker, eighty miles outside Boston (still, arguably, hanging in as a Boston 'burb, as Henniker, New Hampshire was), was not important to anyone then. We all had blood-and-guts work to take care of. Whoever Wendy Smith thought she was by then, I had my own, semi-heart of darkness version of her, because I knew she would end up famous, and because I wanted us to have a real night together. A few nights later, we were all lounging with drinks in a large living room space, in one of the dormitories we were allowed to use, and I invited her into my room, down the hall, for a smoke. Nothing happened at first— but a wind current somehow slammed the door shut, and the rest, as they

say, was history. Even as what happened failed to advance her Virginia family's Boston interests substantially. I always tried to get her to stick to the poems, stick to the poems. Sometimes, I succeeded. This action was all relayed to John Rind muy rapidamente. He, it would seem, cared more about the action in Philly, but he was planning a surprise for me. So, the penultimate night of the retreat, I was stunned to see Larsen's silver Toyota Corolla roll into my temporary parking lot, carrying John Rind and Christopher Severin. John emerged from the front seat, not having driven and thus unsurprisingly drunk, with a bottle of Stoli. "Jesus Christ, guys. Nice Corolla, Larsen. Jesus." "Well, you sounded like you were having so much fun, we thought we'd join you." Christopher couldn't resist adding, "I've got the camera and I'm ready for action. Where are the suspects?" I laughed, because Wendy, I knew, would hide from a camera. Debbie, who I enjoyed just being buddies with, was more promising. "Wait here, guys. Let me see who I can round up." Sure enough, Debbie and the whole Jon Arnold crew, were hanging out on an adjacent porch. They gave me the usual quizzical stare and I said, "Some of my friends are here from Philly, guys. We can move you past all that white wine-n-wine cooler crap and into the vodka zone. You in?" Debbie ran her hands through her blonde mane and the soprano sing-song emerged, "Is this the guy I was talking to the other night on the phone?" "Yeah, Larsen, and two other guys." "I'll go. Do you guys want to come?" "Uh...we will." So, the party of five we were, Debbie and I and three pick-ups I only vaguely knew, ambled back to the lot and the Stoli. I was stunned to see Wendy Smith already there. "I met your friends here, Adam. They seem to have more vodka on their hands than you do. John here's been mighty friendly." She took a neat, not insubstantial pull of the stuff. Eventually, John, Christopher, and Wendy formed a group to do something obscure— an indoors place in walking distance she thought good fodder for pictures. Oddly, as I couldn't have called, it was Christopher and her who seemed to click most. Unfortunately, there went our vodka. "Guys, let's go to Daniel's, alright?" Larsen was accosted by Debbie, "And you, buster, have a lot of 'fessing up to do. I think I know your story, indeed." Things were blurry; we found ourselves seated outside at Daniel's, and I suddenly remembered that these three weirdos would have to sleep somewhere tonight. "So, y'all can crash in my room, right?" "Yeah. That's what we thought." Debbie chirped, "Won't they be knocking Wendy out of place?" "No, Deb. That's over. I mean, it's not over, but we're not getting married." Gleeful at my drunkenness, Deb rejoindered, "Thanks, Adam. I can see you're thinking carefully about what you're doing, as usual." Oh what a night, as the song goes. And it did with the three goons crashing on my floor. Christopher got some shots he didn't expect to get; John found enough action to clean off most of the Stoli; and Larsen met Jon Arnold and made instant business venture plans to connect Henniker and South Philly. When they left the next day, I understood that my

life had developed an intense, headlong sense of momentum, and that for the time being, I was just along for the ride. Silver Corolla or not...

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Andrew Lundwall (Rockford, Illinois, USA): from *Gardening at Night*

ALLURE

transparent mattresses gray clouds
stars of sad reunions
sad centers of nectar
frigid with ground below
the spinal cord of
is rotating hum
is splintering
wooden halo
beneath the weight
taken in installments
anything is moon
wear it
whether pills or
metallic sacrament
saharan depressions
the days' dials pursue
robes flowing behind
profound obsessions
stringed instruments
purpose is problem
she'd kicked her habit
i'll admit
that i was hesitant
infested persistent
a leg up her skirt
is motivation
lurking around
the telephone booth
with its sincerest face on

my legs would not and still
last night
the rosary between her knees
her face from east to west
like an echo between poles
it was emotionally close captioned
it read like telepathy as it
struggled from shoulder to shoulder

GOODNESS

she looked so real
i couldn't bring myself
to hold her muster up
the sky is funeral blue
as anxious earth unrolls
before and behind you
a glued face to a window
is where goddess
refuses intervention
a glued face to a window
is a face instead of you
unsteady on glossy feet
the city's recycled son
packing an unheard-of heat
in his tight jeans levi's
two neon virgin marys
flashing in his scrambled eyes
or remember when norfordville we'd went
to do when you'd thrown away important
that day way back in her ageless beauty
the clouds pissed all of this passionate intensity

© Andrew Lundwall 2009

Susan Wallack (Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, USA): "Gone"

1.

You disappear so beautifully.

Eyes wide, perfectly aligned,

as if you could see, as if
Matisse's joy

might be happiness...the azure/
pumpkin/scarlet fields set

lightly inside his penciled outline.

The main star shines, no glare.
And it's possible that

somewhere less frantic
charged particles

rest before they exit.

2.

But blonde light, like a starlet's
hair, sweeps all things

equally: calamity rests,
fallow in the field.

And the north-bred yearling hawk

looms motionless, like a stuffed
& mounted version of himself.

Watching. Shadowless. Red eyes wide
& perfectly aligned. And then,

when it's time, he just disappears.

originally published in the Minnetonka Review

Vlad Pogorelov (California, USA): "No. 113"

So I quit my job,
Came back home,
Had two shots of vodka,
A glass of wine,
And the classical music
On the radio
Was just right
For the time being

A cat sat by me
She looked quite happy too
And, though she never quit
Her job of chasing cockroaches
Around the house,
Somehow both of us
Felt very good.

© Vlad Pogorelov 1997

Threescore and Ten, etc.

Threescore and Ten collects all seventy book covers of *Otoliths*, from the first issue in 2006 straight through to concluding issue seventy in 2023. Artists vary widely and wildly. Mark Young: editor, curator.

More from the new *Chimes*: #17 and #37.

Cheers!



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